

Dragoon

Arc 5

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Chapter 91: The Path to be a Dragon Knight

Among the fifth years awaiting graduation, there were many of them who had decided their future courses.

For this was an academy to nurture the Courtois Kingdom's future officials and officers. One would apply to the knight brigade they wanted to enter, and if they didn't get in, they would be sent around to wherever was thought to be lacking in personnel.

Those with top academics were chosen out every year and instated to the posts they desired. To the others, they would receive notices that they were accepted to their second or third choices.

The final extended break was the final chance for these students to spread out their wings. At the same time, there were many students who caused problems during that period and had their tentative offers revoked.

Around this season, the bureaus that managed the Courtois Kingdom's human resources prayed that the students didn't cause any problems as they decided their stations.

The positions for those with top grades were usually decided before the break. But this year, there was a bit of a problem.

... It was Rudel.

While he had obtained a dragon, he held a vital fixed position in Courtois called white knight. You could say it was only natural there were arguments to be had over his placement. The higher-ups could have decided, but the problem was Aileen. The early plan they set up was for him to be captain of the royal guard.

But now, Fritz had been selected as captain. Alongside his graduation in two years' time, he was to take his captain seat.

Aileen, who saw Rudel as her mortal enemy, gave an order through the minister to station him as a rank-and-file of the royal guard. But there was an even bigger problem... it was Fina.

Because Fina wanted to make him captain of the defenders she had established, she brought out the king and queen's name to order it so. There were signatures from a number of ministers, and it looked like their side held the advantage.

But the biggest problem of all was Rudel. The man himself had rejected his offers from both knight brigades, and selected dragoon.

Human resources was in tears.

In a conference room of the palace, representatives of all the knight brigades had gathered to discuss the placement of Rudel alone. Those charged with HR distributed the documents they prepared before promptly starting the meeting. They didn't have the time to spend on Rudel alone, and there were still students whose placements had yet to be decided.

"Well then, I'd like to start the conference. As you can see from the documents, the opinions of the higher-ups are divided, so this time, we wish to hear the opinions of each brigade..."

As the HR representative tried to continue on, the vice-captain of the royal guard raised his voice. His voice wasn't that intimidating, but he couldn't help but sound condescending.

"The assembly has already decided to move towards stationing him in the royal guard. Is there really any problem with that? I do think the other knights will be troubled to deal with him."

There, this time, the rep of the defenders stuck in his mouth.

"Making a captain of the white knight is one thing, but you'll register him as a simple knight among many? There's no helping the crown be against it. There were many opposing views at the assembly. Well, I personally want him to come over to the defenders, but the problem is the dragon. The defenders don't have the necessary facilities to make use of a dragon."

While it seemed Fina was fixated on Rudel, Aleist's instatement to the defenders was practically set in stone. It was plainly visible that those around would be opposed if they moved to obtain Rudel as well.

Like Fina had tried to collect a white and black cat, Aileen was trying to get

the white and black knights under Fritz. The sisters may have been surprisingly similar, the country's face wouldn't accept that idea. Getting the queen on her side, Fina only had to whisper, 'A commoner knight is trying to get the two symbols of this country to his beck and call,' to make her greatly opposed.

While they felt sorry for Fina, the defenders had given up on acquiring Rudel. If the man applied, they would have accepted him, but even so, he had applied to the dragoons, and there was no changing that.

Once the topic of dragons came out, the dragoon captain offered his opinion. This year, the dragoon captain and vice-captain were retiring, and for a while, the unit would be dedicated to raising its new members.

"It was a gaia subspecies, was it? Sure enough, I can't think any of the others will be able to look after it. When it comes to handling dragons, it will be too much for any other brigade to handle. We'd quite appreciate if the royal guard returned the personnel they borrowed soon."

Fritz' dragon was being managed by the royal guard. But the ones actually looking after it had been borrowed from the dragoons.

"Hmm, the royal guard is the shield of the crown. Unlike you lot, it won't have to fight. As long as the dragon appears at ceremonies, it won't be a problem."

"Though it's a dragon far more splendid than your own captain's."

The high knight captain spat some cynicism at the royal guard's vice-captain. The two of them had the standings of former subordinate and superior, and the man had much to say of his former subordinates who had betrayed the high knights.

The charge of HR endured the urge to let out a sigh, putting together the opinions of each brigade. The dissatisfaction towards the royal guard, and the defenders' situations caused Rudel's wishes to be granted.

"Then by majority vote, Rudel-dono shall be stationed with the dragoons. We express our deepest gratitude for all of you taking time out of your busy days to..."

Once he finished talking, the HR charge hurriedly collected up the documents and left the conference room. Even seeing that, there weren't any knights who

thought it disrespectful. They all knew that right around now, the HR department was frantically modifying placements under their demands.



While each knight brigade sought out proficient personnel, the students were fully enjoying their final vacation.

Spending her break at the academy, Izumi held the letter from the palace in her hands, a slightly sad look on her face. It was written that Izumi's qualifications to be a high knight were accepted, and her enlistment had been decided.

After graduation, while she wouldn't hold a territory, she would be given the noble rank of a Baron in Courtois. Even if she was to be called a Baron, she had no land to look after, and she was merely recognized as a noble. In exchange for receiving the country's pledge of nobility, she gained a large number of obligations.

Izumi had gotten what she wanted in her hands, but when it came to writing a letter to her family, she grew sad. It was what she wanted. But accepting it made her parting with Rudel feel all too real.

She had been able to investigate it to an extent while she was at the academy. Entering the Arses House's wing would be close to throwing away all the status she went to such lengths to obtain. With the Arses House that looked down on demi-humans and other races, the Shirasagi House had no future.

"I should just throw away my house, is what I should have said. But I think that's impossible for me."

The head of the Shirasagi House would be the high knight Izumi. In order to pass down her baron status, she would have to prove a certain level of loyalty to the country. Either some great achievement or over ten years of service to the high knights... she couldn't pass it on immediately.

In her room at the dorm, Izumi muttered to herself. To her house, she wrote a businesslike letter saying her instalment as a high knight had been decided, and another one about her feelings. She wrote one of each.

Recalling her family, she imagined what actions her father might take. Izumi

was the only one recognized as a noble. Her family only had the rights to inherit it. If they were standard nobles, it wouldn't be a problem, but there were large problems when it came to houses that were only just set up.

In order to obtain connections between Houses, Izumi would have to marry into a noble house with a history in Courtois. Her other siblings couldn't do it. Izumi would be married, and one of her siblings would succeed her Baron name.

Izumi recalled the faces of her little brothers. Perhaps her relatives would have something to say too. Once she finished writing her letter, she opened the window to air out her room.

As the cold air surrounded her, she felt her train of thought clearing up. But even in her cleared head, Izumi couldn't find an answer.

"Hah, I want to see..."

It was the moment she was about to mutter Rudel's name. A shake as if an earthquake had broken out, and a strong wind caused Izumi to lean out the window to see what had happened.

A little distance from her window, a smoke cloud had risen. Once the fumes cleared away, a white dragon... Rudel on Sakuya's back approached the girls' dorm.

As Sakuya waved her large hand, approaching on two legs, Izumi felt some vestiges of her past self. But without any memories of when she was human, the current Sakuya was a dragon... the collateral damage was nothing to scoff at.

Leaping out of the window in her loungewear, Izumi made for Rudel and Sakuya.



"What are you doing, Rudel!?"

To make sure Sakuya didn't step on Izumi, who had come to her feet, Rudel issued an order for Sakuya to stop. He spread out the papers he held so carefully in his hands, turning to Izumi and crying out.

“Izumi! I did it! I’m finally, I’m finally a dragoon!! The notice came last night, but I couldn’t wait until the end of the break. I called Sakuya over, and had her come all the way to the academy!”

‘God, hear me out! He called me all of a sudden, and I’ve been flying nonstop since yesterday! I’m tired!!’

“Good work, Sakuya. As expected of my dragon! I love you.”

‘Oh, that’s all you ever say.’

Before Izumi, Rudel’s delight was exploding as he leapt from Sakuya and landed. Understanding the situation, Izumi sent the dismounted Rudel a warm smile.

“Good for you, Rudel. So now you’re the dragoon you always wanted to be.”

Rudel had grown to be more of an adult than when they had first met five years back. He had grown in height, and no youth remained in his features. But his eyes alone were the same as ever.

The eyes and smile of a child hadn’t changed one bit.

“Yeah, finally... that aside, what about you, Izumi?”

“Me? Ah, I got an offer from the high knights. I took the interview and exam, but maybe I never thought I’d actually pass...”

As Izumi made a bit of a lonely face, Rudel grabbed her shoulders. As she opened her eyes wide, Rudel directed her a smile.

“So your dreams came true too, Izumi! With this, we’ve both accomplished our dreams at the academy... then, let’s go!”

“W-where?”

“We’ll ride Sakuya there. Your house is fine too. I’ll take you wherever you want! Ah! But if possible, make due with someplace inside Courtois...”

Around the end, Rudel’s words grew weak, and Izumi ended up laughing. Sure enough, it would be a huge problem if Rudel rode his dragon off to a foreign land.

Perhaps only just remembering Izumi’s hometown was in the Orient, he

scratched his head apologetically. Izumi definitely did want to return home, but for now, she just wanted to be with Rudel.

“You’re right... but is Sakuya alright?”

There were dragons who would refuse anyone apart from their contractors from riding their backs. Recalling that information she had heard from Rudel, Izumi looked up at Sakuya for confirmation.

‘Izumi is okay. But Aleist is no good!!’

Sakuya assented to Izumi riding her back, but for some reason, she screamed out that Aleist was no good. Rudel tried asking the reason, but Sakuya would only say it was psychologically impossible.

“Is it that? Perhaps she really did just hate being called Flan that much. She doesn’t have the memories, but perhaps the hatred alone remains. I also tried naming her Flan Alamode and Mogamon. I should be careful from now on.”

While Rudel calmly thought over it, Izumi muttered in her heart that Flan Alamode was going too far.

“Well, there’s no changing the past. Then shall we be off?”

Embracing Izumi tight, Rudel leapt right onto Sakuya’s back. Couldn’t he just use his wind magic to fly through the sky? To Rudel who boasted enough technique to make one misapprehend so, it was an easy task to lift and move a single person.

“Eh? H-hey, wait a moment, Rudel!”

‘Here we go~!’

By the dragoon and dragon who wouldn’t listen to what she had to say, Izumi was dragged off in her dressing gown for a walk through the sky.



In the Gaia Empire, Askewell and Mies’ preparations to invade Courtois were gradually underway.

“At soonest, around a year?”

“Yes. But rearing the wyvern squad will still take some time.”

In his office, Askewell looked over Mies' report as he thought over his trump cards in the Courtois invasion. He couldn't help but be lacking in hands when it came to ogres alone.

And the trump card he had urgently prepared to stand against the dragoons... were wyverns. They were wyverns brought forth in the same way as the ogres, and truly faithful steeds.

For any military man with a level of talent, it was possible to ride one.

But Askewell wasn't satisfied yet. The revival of the two great knights in Courtois made it only natural, and there were some within Courtois who had noticed his movements.

While it couldn't be called sufficient, Courtois was laying out countermeasures. And more than anything, Askewell's instincts were telling him that things would be dangerous like this.

"Mies, how many 'Gora' will you be able to prepare?"

"Gora!? But didn't you say those ones were dangerous..."

Boasting four arms, they were called the strongest monsters on land. Those were the gora. Their heads and torsos were close to humans, so they were also called giants. Not found in Courtois, they were the gaia empire's greatest enemy.

Their form, rather than an enlarged human, was closer to a giant monkey. When their heads and torsos had no hair, for some reason, their arms and legs had a thick coat.

Their close-to-humans heads were warped in sinister expressions. But the biggest problem was their size. Those large builds that surpassed twenty meters... there were individuals out there equal to, or even greater than dragons in power.

On top of that, their ferocious temperament made coexistence impossible.

A large reason they didn't exist in Courtois was the dragoons. In the past, the dragoons had subjugated every gora in the country to protect the peace of the land. But there were still gora in the empire.

Gora boasted a certain level of intellect, and they wouldn't approach Courtois where the dragoons still lived. Askewell had tasted the dread of a gora hunt a number of times.

It wasn't just their power, their knowledge was the problem. With their large builds, the fact they could use tools troubled the empire to no ends. That they were few in numbers was the empire's salvation. But even so, they would put out many casualties each year.

"If we use the gora, there's no telling what will happen to Courtois' soil."

"Even so, Mies. At this rate, we're going to lose. Our wyvern units might be raising their polish, but we're up against the long history of the dragoons... numbers alone won't be enough."

The empire was betting on this time's invasion of Courtois. The strengthened ogres they pushed themselves to obtain, and their enhanced wyverns... the maintenance fees alone were considerable.

"... Five, no, perhaps seven might be possible. Any more, and just maintaining them will no longer be possible."

"I see. There's no problem with the number of ogres and wyverns. As long as we can get our hands on some gora, we should be able to manage."

"Is that alright? The gora are... vicious. If we take one wrong step, and err in our control...!"

"Don't worry. At worst, we'll just use them out. It would feel sickening for me to keep one too close."

They were an existence all knights and soldiers of the empire detested. That was the monster called gora.

Adding power to the empire was an important thing for Mies. But it was almost as if Courtois was getting stronger, and the empire was adding onto itself as a postscript. She couldn't help but get that feeling.

There was no deliberateness to it. Let alone that, the research that had been carried over several decades was reaching its end in only a few years. Could it be that the heavens had allied with them to attack Courtois?

Among the researchers Mies led, there were some who had honestly come to believe it.

It was simply that unnatural, how the empire augmented its forces.

The plot of the world went on, as if to heat up its final battle. An ending no one wanted was approaching for all eyes to see.

It was all to make a hero of the protagonist... and the start of the final chapter, the birth of the hero, would open its curtains alongside Rudel's death.

The empire would lose, and the kingdom would face massive casualties. The setting was showing its last struggle to lead the world to the way it should be.



Elsewhere, one who had noticed the movements of the empire... Fina was losing her temper in her room at the palace.

As one who had noticed their movements, she had unknowingly put Askewell on guard, but right now, her head was full of Aleist.

Of course, it wasn't love.

After Millia was successfully obtained by the defenders, Aleist volunteered to join himself. That much was just as Fina planned. But it was here that Fina had gone too far.

Obtaining Aleist and putting checks on the royal guard had made her go lax.

She knew that her real objective, Rudel, would apply to the dragoons without any hesitation. Even so, she thought he would come to the defenders. In truth, she planned to use her mother, the queen's, power to twist the defenders up.

But obtaining Aleist called all her plans to go awry.

After obtained Aleist, the commanders on site grew wary of the antipathy they faced from other knight brigades.

"Goddammit. They calculated my personality and had Ness write the report... damn, I can't even get angry like this."

The report had been put together by Ness, who had been stationed in the defenders under Sophina's orders.

‘We failed, meow. Forgive us, meow.’

“I can’t get angry at a fluffy!! Shit! I went and got too greedy, but obtaining Aleist is now rearing its head... that plague!! I’ll be working him to the bone once he comes to the defenders.”

To Fina, Aleist was a plague, but from Rudel’s point of view, he was the messiah. Rudel’s standing was even higher than Aleist’s.

On top of hailing from an archduke house with ties to the king, his strength was said to be strongest in the academy. The queen knew him well, and considering the palace’s face, they wanted to have him as captain of the defenders. Rudel’s instatement into the defenders itself brought with it talks of raising it to an official brigade.

When the palace was preparing itself to accept him, Fina’s greed caused the site commanders to regulate her. That Rudel was able to become a dragoon was because of Aleist’s instatement to the defenders.

Aleist himself didn’t realize a thing.

But to Fina who knew the surrounding situation, what crushed her plan to make Rudel captain of the defenders was undoubtedly her own conceit and Aleist.

“Don’t screw with me, dammit!!! Having come so far, master is to leave my hands...! Just how much do you think I had to prepare for this!?”

Fina was losing her mind, but she was able to understand the decisions the commanders had made. If she hadn’t grown greedy, the plan would have succeeded. So she was even more troubled over where to smash her feelings into.

In a place he didn’t know, Aleist had saved Rudel. And because of that, he got Fina’s eyes on him...

Like that, because of Aleist, Rudel’s path to be a dragoon had been opened.

Chapter 92: Demands and Preparing for Graduation

Around the time their life at the academy greeted its end, the graduates began cleaning up the rooms they had used for five years.

There were second and third-year graduates as well, and around this time, the school dorms would be a busy mess. There were students who'd call forth servants from their houses, and others who would hound up underclassmen to clean.

Similarly, Rudel had begun to clean up his luggage that had grown from when he first came.

He had few belongings when he first came, but over the course of five years, he had added on more.

"This book is... I'll keep it."

The book he took in his hands was a child-gearred picture book introducing the dragoons. It was something Rudel had given to Sakuya, and something he had left in his room. Rudel had read it as a child, imagining his own form in the future, and after that, it had become a memento he had given to Sakuya.

Apart from that, there were other pieces of memorabilia around.

The sword he had used from his youth, while it was broken, he still had it carefully preserved. He had tried to throw it away, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. So without any way to use it, he was troubled over what to do.

"Hah, it's grown to a surprising amount. My clothes are the same, there's no way I..."

While Rudel's belongings were on the scarce side, as he didn't know the situation of other students, he felt like he had a lot. Luecke was mulling over his mountains of books, while Eunius was troubled to deal with all the presents he never got around to giving to girls.

The largest problem was Aleist.

It was certain he would have at least five engagements, and the girls had

handed over many a gift from their houses. Things worthy of Aleist, and Fina had also sent loads of presents under the pretense of celebration.

Fina had aimed for this time, conducting harassment under the name of celebrating his instatement to the defenders.

She picked the bulkiest things she could find and sent them to trouble him. But because of that, there were whispers of rumors that Fina was gunning for Aleist.

It was a disaster for Aleist, but after she self-destructed, Fina had grown quite docile as of late. She had realized herself that she was lacking in composure.

But a princess all the same, Aileen remained with her composure in tatters.

As Rudel and Aleist both left the academy, the palace grew fearful that the power balance between its forces would crumble. The names white and black knight held special meaning in Courtois.

For that sake, Fritz was transferred to the three-year course and forcefully inaugurated as royal guard captain. It was a result of Aileen and her followers concluding it would be too late for Fritz to become captain a whole two years later.

Having come so far, Aileen could no longer ignore the defenders Fina had set up.

Rudel had become a dragoon, but Aleist's name was still on the list of Aileen's engagement candidates. If he raised some achievements in the defenders, then that would be used as a reason to proceed talks right to marriage.

To Aileen, she was considerably cornered.

But it was quite like Aileen to not look and feel fear from a war potential perspective.



“Hah, Rudel-sama.”

Gazing out the classroom window, Fina muttered. If she muttered Rudel's name so lovingly, the rumors would go and spread on their own.

In truth, it had become well known that her love for Aleist had awakened, and once it spread to the palace, there was no taking it back. The queen made a ruckus over it, hastening a marriage between Aleist and Fina.

“Didn’t she just say Rudel-sama?”

“Eh? But Fina-sama and Aleist-sama are...”

“By the gods, a love triangle!”

In the classroom, her peers were making a ruckus. A majority of them were nobles, but there were some commoners among them, eavesdropping with intrigue.

(Tsk, it really is unpleasant that such strange rumors are spreading. If I become a rumor with Aleist, there really won’t be any return. In the worst case, mother will forcefully have me marry Aleist, and push master onto my sister. To think my sister who hasn’t gone to any troubles would be the greatest wall to my fluffadise.)

While Fina was vexed within, in the first place, Aileen was always a demi-human hater. The moment Fina’s patience ran out, they were fated to clash someday.

In the documents prepared with her textbooks, the defenders and royal guard... the names of the recruits to each knight brigade were listed.

(Five high knights this year, and nine dragoons... there’s no helping it for the dragoons, but it looks like the high knights are about to be crushed. I wanted to crush them before that black hair entered! The border is the same as always...)

The high knights put up a resistance, and she wasn’t able to dismantle them as she wanted. From Fina’s point of view, it wasn’t anything too important, so she instantly changed her train of thought.

She had investigated whoever intrigued her and paid especial attention to the movements of the royal guard. Choosing Aileen over her, many young nobles had already infiltrated her faction.

Seeing the movements of the enemy force, it really was the end.

(So that house is no good either. That house is joining my sister too? Oy, oy, that’s quite a number.)

Unable to stop her laughter within, Fina planned to use this opportunity and largely chip away at the nobles' power. If blood was going to flow regardless, she might as well use it to its fullest.

That was Fina Courtois.

It was something that had been decided from the moment her sister Aileen had chosen to prioritize her personal matters over the country. But Aileen was strangely blessed with luck. To Fina, that was a major problem.

The formation of the royal guard was the same, it was almost as if she was loved by the heavens.

(Well, it's impossible I'll ever see a heaven outside my fluffadise. But even so... why does my sister have such a large faction? There's no way I'd ever side with her. The risk is too great. Could it be there's someone backing her? ... Hah, no way, no way.)

The fact that she had a large backer called the plot was something even Fina had no way of knowing.



"A graduation party? We're having one this year too?"

In the boys' dorm dining hall, Rudel and the usual members were having a meal. That day was a rare one where Aleist was at the same table, participating in the conversation.

"That's right! This time, we're the lead roles, right? Then there's no point if we don't enjoy ourselves."

Eunius was delighted. While his academics were abysmal, he somehow managed to maintain the bare minimum grades up to graduation. He was delighted to finally be freed from the books.

"Even if you say to enjoy it, you know. Food and live performances... what else is there? If the academy puts too much money into it, the palace will get noisy."

From a financial standpoint, they wouldn't be able to do anything too large-scale, said Luecke. Aleist finished his desert before joining in.

“A party, eh... like a masquerade?”

“What’s that?”

As Aleist spoke of a masquerade, Eunius bit on. Perhaps Rudel didn’t have any interest as he sipped his drink.

“No, well, you attend the party in disguise. How should I put it, like a costume or... something you wouldn’t usually where. You can wear a large stuffed animal? No, I think that’s a little different.”

While he explained it, Aleist was unable to convey a clear image.

“What you don’t usually where? Will the men wear dresses or something? That sounds a bit sickening.”

On Luecke’s impression, Eunius made a smile.

“Now that sounds interesting.”

“Hah?”

“You...”

“What you don’t usually wear...”

As the three of them sighed, Eunius burst into laughter. Imagining a man wearing a dress in public, he grew just a little sick.

“Idiot, it’s best to have a lot of ideas, right? It’s just a thought, it’s not like they’ll actually take it up, so let’s spice things up and submit some interesting requests. It seems the other folks are submitting requests to the academy, after all.”

Knowing it would be held again this year, the students were submitting requests to the academy. There were many noble students with ample party experience, and they put in many requests.

“Sure enough... right! Then I want a beauty contest!!”

Aleist jumped on board Eunius’ cajolery, taking out something to write with and listing his ideas. The three who didn’t know what a beauty contest was sought the contents from Aleist.

“What sort of this is that? Well, if it’s beauty, it probably has something to do

with the girls...”

As Luecke thought, Aleist explained with a smile. These sort of pre-school-festival events, in his past life, they were things he couldn't take part in even if he wanted to.

“Among the girls participating in the contest, you choose the most beautiful one. It's better to have more participants, and we can have active students take part as well. Hey, it's just a request... so let's put in a swimsuit judging.”

“Beauty? Then Izumi has my vote! No, wait. Beauty... can Sakuya participate? If she can, then that'll be a hard choice.”

Rudel showed some interest, and as expected, it had to do with Izumi. From how he asserted of Sakuya's beauty, it meant that to Rudel, Izumi was just about as precious to him as a dragon.

But the three men didn't notice that.

“No, that's not happening.”

“Rudel, a dragon is...”

“You want a dragon to wear a swimsuit? Yeah, no.”

Once Aleist got the idea together, Luecke was next. Recalling the previous party, he remembered how Aleist had caused a ruckus.

Aleist, who had nonchalantly accumulated romance events, had no insufficiency of these sort of topics.

“Last year was interesting. You know, when Aleist was assaulted by a woman. In that case, should we hold a confession in the hall?”

“... How long are you going to drag on that joke on?”

“Too bad for you. As long as we're alive, I'm going to tell everyone I meet.”

As Eunius said that with a straight face, Rudel inflicted the final blow.

“That confession at the tournament was the same, but that was considerably famous. A confession in the sickroom, and one in a concluded space... ah, I'm talking about the places you seduced your fiancés. Right now, they've become popular landmarks.”

“Why do you have to gouge out my heart!!? A majority of them were mistakes and misunderstandings! Even if a graduate, I’ll leave my name in some strange way!”

“What are you talking about? You’ve already left it. The confession spots of Aleist, the god of love have become rumors all over the academy. Or so I heard from Izumi.”

He had actualized the harem that was thought to be impossible, and even so, Aleist kept confessing. He was now being called the academy’s god of love.

“Your info source is usually Izumi.”

If Rudel had heard it from Izumi, Luecke was sure it wasn’t mistaken. Izumi was popular among the girls. She had likely heard of the spots from her juniors and went to confirm them. Luecke’s guess was on the mark, he wasn’t wrong.

The fact Izumi was able to form connections with her junior girls was truly a good thing indeed.

Becoming prefect was a nice opportunity for her to expand her sphere of influence.

“Then let’s add on a public confession. Now then, god of love, put it down on the form.”

Overdoing things, Eunius had Aleist fill in an entry for public confession. Having come so far, Rudel was the only one who hadn’t submitted an idea.

“Do you have any requests, Rudel?”

As Luecke asked for Rudel’s request, Rudel made a bit of a troubled face.

“Me? I haven’t taken parts in many parties. I don’t know what would be good.”

“Nothing? Just say whatever. We’re just submitting ideas, and it’s not like they’ll actually use them.”

Aleist put out a few ideas, and Rudel selected one from among them.



“The events for this year’s graduation party have been decided, so let me

relay them.”

The staff gathered for a meeting to talk about the graduation party. They felt relief that the fundamental curriculum’s class battles had ended without incident.

But there were quite a few problems with the graduation party. It was something that had started last year, and now that young nobles had begun to take notice, the party’s contents were a problem.

Starting with food and drink, they got all sorts of requests for high-class goods. What’s more, call in some beauties, and have them put on a show, there were quite a few requests coming in.

From among them, there were only a few that were actually possible to actualize. It was the teaching staff’s hope that the status of the students who put in the requests would contain the dissatisfaction of the other students.

“It’s impossible to assemble high-class foodstuff for all students, so here, we will be stressing the contents of the party itself.”

They couldn’t use too much money, but be that as it may, they had to make it fun. That was the challenge.

“Then first off, we recognize the request for the attendees to participate in costume, and next, a swimsuit judging among the female students... that sounds cold. We’ll do something with magic. And skipping the public confession, let’s look at the king’s game.”

All of Rudel’s group’s proposals had gone through. The biggest reason was that they were all plausible on an economic front.

“Is there really no problem with the beauty contest?”

A female teacher spoke in a bit of a harsh tone, but from the point of view of the men, they did have a desire to watch. More than anything, it would be a waste if they didn’t do something to occupy the time.

“Participation isn’t obligatory, after all. It’s entirely possible we’ll have no contestants at all.”

Softly evading the female teacher’s question, they moved onto the public

confession. There were students whose positions made it troublesome to confess or be confessed to, so that would be a problem.

“Public confession... isn’t that taking things too far?”

“Yeah, I feel the same. Some might let the drink get to them, but would anyone really confess before several hundred? At most, someone’ll do it as a side show.”

The male staff member acting as chairman began explaining the final submission.

“Last is the king’s game. In this one, we pick a ‘king’ from among the participants and have all the others select a number. Without knowing those numbers, the king gets to give an order”

“Well, that one’s a game, so it shouldn’t be a problem.”

The headmaster was sure the last game would have far less issue than the first three. Those around were arguing a little about how the beauty contest was going too far.

But from the knowledge Aleist had brought with him, no one had noticed.

The headmaster was greeting the graduation of the generation with so many problem children, and he was overcome with relief and loneliness. Rather than the party, he was happy they were able to safely graduate.

So no one noticed. That the king’s game was the most problematic of all...

Chapter 93: The Costume and the Beauty Contest

Once the bell rung six, Rudel stopped swinging his sword and wiped off his sweat.

He gazed at the backs of all the students in the dorm courtyard, who had started on their way to the dining hall after hearing the sound.

The early morning training he had done from his enrollment had continued on to his graduation. From the eyes of a stranger, it might have been something praiseworthy.

But to Rudel, and the students who trained in a similar manner, it was only normal. If they slacked off, then that's just how far they'd fall behind the others.

One could say Eunius and Aleist were extraordinary. The two of them didn't train in the morning, but they did devote their time to it during other hours. Their life styles simply weren't suited to train in the early warning.

"So it ends today."

Wiping his sweat, Rudel sat on the spot and looked up at the sky.

He recalled all the time he had spent here since he first came. He had met Vargas during morning training, and Vargas had been the first friend he ever made.

If he saw any troubled students, he did try to call out, but his status would always get in the way, and it would never go as smoothly as it had with Vargas.

Personality problems and the air Rudel gave off had become factors that prevented others from approaching him. While he hadn't noticed it, the fact that he had become strongest in the academy was also to blame.

Rather than being fond of Rudel, his underclassmen were in awe. The class years one and two below kept their distance with the incident with Chlust and Fritz.

When it came to underclassmen below that, Rudel's exorbitant ability would create distance. There weren't any commoner students who would even think

to approach the future archduke and white knight that was Rudel.

Young nobles would only greet him, at most. Feeling a bit of his own awkwardness, Rudel made a bitter smile. While to each his own, he would have no choice but to deal with people from now on.

That he thought that meant that Rudel had matured. When he entered the academy, he largely didn't understand the importance of human interaction.

"Now then, I guess I'll prepare for graduation."

Standing, he headed for the dining hall.

He had prepared for the sake of this day, and alongside his loneliness, he felt just a little happy.



The graduation ceremony ended without incident and from afternoon, the academy was busy with the final preparations for the party.

Within all that, the culprit who had devised this new event was delighted.

"King's game!!"

While Fina wasn't allowed to go out while the party was being prepared, in exchange, Mii was busy at work. In her Mii-less room, she was making a ruckus. It wasn't quite possible for the princes Fina to help set up the party.

The year before, Rudel and the others had taken part, causing quite an awkward air. But taking her safety and status in consideration, the academy was able to ask her to refrain. In Fina's place, Mii was spending every day, busily preparing for the event.

"Hah, what is it, princess? Are you scheming something again?"

Correcting the positioning of her glasses with the middle finger of her right hand, Sophina readied herself in her heart for Fina's next spurt of irrationality. She needed to make sure she wasn't surprised no matter what she heard.

Sophina, who could practically be called Fina's retainer at this point, was used to dealing with her.

"... Sophina, look at this schedule. Right here, it has the words King's Game

written in.”

“That is quite a discourteous name. Shall we request the academy to change it?”

“You fool! It is only those small in caliber who complain about all the petty details. The problem is the contents. ‘The king’s orders are absolute!’ What do you think about that?”

“... I think it’s a tad strange for an event at a party. If someone orders another to die on the spot, then the atmosphere will take quite a peculiar turn.”

As Sophina spoke of brutal detail, Fina criticized her expressionlessly.

“How foolish. This is why your marriage interviews continue to fail. This time makes thirty two, does it? You’re on your way there! Courtois’ high score of fifty six is right before your eyes.”

The high score for marriage interviews among nobles-particularly women-was fifty six. While marriages for royalty were close to obligations, for those low in status and relatively free, both sides were able to turn down the matchups.

And in Courtois, the more girly ones were the most popular.

“Why do you know about that!? A-and, I’m not aiming to update the score...”

Having failed once more, Sophina recalled her delicate partner. While they attended the academy, a large portion of nobles would often skip classes. Her partner was unable to see a splendid knight like Sophina as girly in any shape or form.

Rudel’s generation was rare among nobles, where the future archduke was earnest, so they followed his lead. Looking at it from that side, Rudel and the others had set a good example.

In order to sell themselves to these future heads of the factions, it would be best to make an earnest effort. The nobles had made calculated, objective judgements.

“... That’s what they all say as their numbers go up. And once they hold the high score, their hearts break every time. Putting that aside, the problem is that this game is being held in a festive hall... and that means the orders can be

pervy as hell, right? I mean, they'll all have a bit of drink in their systems, and it's the final time they can fool around as students! Don't you think this is the perfect place to seal the deal?"

Becoming a little fearful of Fina's expressionless zeal, Sophina cautioned her she was going too far.

"Sealing the deal at a party is a little..."

"Oh? How far are you imagining? I was talking about a kiss. Hey, Sophina, just what sort of indecent things did you imagine? Hey!?"

"I-in that case, you just have to get your feelings across in the public confession."

As Sophina forcefully changed the subject, Fina grinned within, choosing to play along.

"Even if I confess in that game, anyone would think it was a joke, right? If we kiss, and I take on a heartrending attitude, everyone around will go and imagine it on their own."

This girl's dark, or so Sophina made light of her master when Fina suddenly turned serious.

"But in order to do that, I'll have to become king and I'll have to know master's numbers... hey, Sophina?"

Understanding what Fina was thinking and what she desired, Sophina could only silently nod.

(Hah, what am I even doing.)



In the party hall, the preparations had finished, and the graduates in disguise started appearing one after the next.

From among them, Eunius in his Viking costume looked considerably real. The man in question was tall in stature and muscular in build. His form as he wore a horned helm of wood, carrying with him a large shield and axe, was truly that of a warrior.

In contrast, Luecke had with him an eastern garment and weapon.

He had asked a blacksmith Rudel was acquainted with to prepare an eastern kimono. His long hair was collected at the back, and his costume was made to enjoy a foreign culture. His katana was made of bamboo, and Luecke had taken a bit of a liking to it.

“What’s this? When a beansprout wears clothes like that, he only looks needlessly wimpier.”

To the end of the end, the two of them spat cynicism, but it had lost the bite it had at the start. More than that, it had become something of a greeting between them.

“When I thought I spotted a bandit here, it was just the musclehead. It suits you so well, I’m shaking in my boots.”

As the two of them glared at one another within the hall, Rudel stepped into the space between them.

“Stop it, both of you! Izumi said no fighting today. Can’t you let it slide, on my face today?”

As Rudel entered the hall a little late, the two of them lost their words.

“... Eh?”

“Y-yeah.”

There was no helping their befuddlement. Before them, of black and brown fur... was Rudel in a dog helmet. That lovable stuffed animal expression gave off quite a lax impression.

A fluffy tail, and stiff, standing ears... The mouth was slim, and perhaps it could look like a wolf. But those large arms and legs, and that large face... there was no way for the two of them to know who it was. Only by the mention of Izumi’s name could they know it was Rudel inside.

“Dude, what’s with that getup?”

As Eunius pointed at Rudel, Rudel took off the headpiece to show his face.

“This? It’s a dog. I worked hard to prepare it. I didn’t want to spend too much money, after all. It’s all handmade.”

“Well that’s quite something. No, that’s not the point. Why a dog?”

Luecke was surprised by the handmade part, but more than that, he couldn’t understand why he had chosen a dog. The students around were also directing their eyes at Rudel.

“The truth is, we keep a dog back home.”

Rudel informed them of the fact his house kept a dog, and Eunius waited for the reason to come after that. But Rudel stayed silent.

“... And?”

“And what?”

Seeing the two unsatisfied with his answer, Rudel tilted his head.

Luecke and Eunius looked at Rudel, mulling over what to say, when Izumi appeared.

Rather than a disguise, Izumi had prepared the clothing she wore in the Orient, participating in a kimono. Her hair was fastened with an ornate hairpin.

“Rudel, you chose something quite conspicuous.”

Rudel put his headpiece back down, showing Izumi the rest of his costume. After he did a full turn, the three of them clapped their hands at the considerable workmanship.

“Right? It’s handmade.”

Rudel showed a peculiar talent, but the three of them had gotten around to thinking anything went with him. Looking around, the most common costume was the girls simply wearing male uniforms.

Many men wore mantles, dressing as magicians.

If there was another conspicuous figure, then surely it was Aleist. He had come in his black knight armor. This was something he had worn on the requests of those around him.

It was a result of his fiancés demanding to see his gallant form

Spotting the usual members, Aleist raced up in his armor.

“Oyy. Huh? Where’s Rudel?”

His black armor was thorny, and his helmet sprouted two golden horns, similar to the viking helmet. The surroundings raised their voices in surprised.

“Amazing.”

“I heard it’s the black knight’s armor.”

“Kickass.”

It was rated surprisingly high, giving Aleist a moment of relief. Even if he knew it wouldn’t be so, he had just a bit of worry they would call him a sufferer of eighth-grade syndrome.

“Aleist, is that really a disguise?”

While Luecke wondered if armor counted in the realm of disguises, Aleist sent a glance over to the animal suit.

“No, I think this is more than enough dress up for me... what’s this costume supposed to be? A wolf?”

As Aleist touched the ear of Rudel’s costume, a clear ominous sound came out. Rudel confirmed the area around his head to find that one of his perky ears had slumped down limp.

As Rudel sat down on the spot, Izumi followed through for him. Because of the costume, it was impossible to see what expression he was making underneath.

When that lovingly made oversized stuffed animal fell into a slump, it was exceedingly cute. But the one inside was depressed.

“R-Rudel? It’s still cute like this.”

“... The ears took an especially large amount of time.”

Seeing him depressed, Aleist had to step in to encourage him. Luecke looked around nervously.

“No, no, this has got its own flavor to it. Yeah, you look more dog-like than before.”

“... Really?”

“Aleist, you...”

On Luecke’s prodding gaze, Aleist realized the one inside was Rudel and apologized.

“I-I’m sorry! I never thought it would break.”

“No, it’s my fault for making something prone to breaking. Next time, I’ll make something of better quality.”

“That’s the spirit, Rudel!”

While Izumi cheered Rudel on, the other three thought.

(He’s making another?)

As everyone desperately tried to cheer Rudel up, the headmaster appeared in the hall. He gave some simple greetings, telling them it was their last event at the academy, and encouraging them to enjoy it.



‘Well then! Let the first Academy beauty contest commence!!’

A fourth year student wore a striking outfit on stage as he took the lead. Never actually expecting the beauty contest to take place, Aleist was a little excited.

The reason being Millia had entered. Her friend had told her she would undoubtedly win if she took part, so the girl in question reluctantly joined in.

But not knowing what a swimsuit was to begin with, Millia was surprised when those undergarment-like pieces were delivered right beforehand.

From the fourth year, Fina and Mii were participating. And to speak to celebrities, Izumi was goaded by Rudel into taking part.

“I never thought they’d actually hold it.”

Holding a glass in one hand, three men watched over the area a little ways away from the students gathered around the stage.

“Hmm? Where’s Rudel?”

Luecke searched out Rudel, who had left his sight before he had noticed it.

Eunius was the same. In this long-awaited heated event, if Rudel wasn't there, it would lose its flavor.

"He'll show up once Izumi comes out, right? Rather, he was wearing something considerably conspicuous, so... wait, oy!!"

Eunius looked at the platform, and noticed the tail of a familiar costume sticking out of the side of the stage.

"Lucky. That's a special box seat, isn't it?"

As Aleist looked on with envy, the event commenced. Girls from fourth and third year made their entries wearing swimsuits of low coverage.

"Oh, not bad at all."

A slackening expression on his face, Eunius quite enjoyed the beauty contest Aleist had proposed. Luecke pretended he wasn't interested, but his eyes were firmly directed at the participants.

It was just at that moment that Fina and Mii appeared in cute swimwear. The hall's enthusiasm reached its peak. It wasn't just the men, the women called out as well to cheer on their friends.

In secret, there were bets being placed over who would win.

"Oy, someone climbed onto the stage."

Luecke directed a glance at the man who had climbed onto the stage, while Aleist and Eunius breathed out some sighs. The drink getting to him, a student had gotten into a stupor and climbed onto the platform to try laying hands on one of the participants.

"Ah, it's Rudel."

But there, Rudel appeared in his costume, kicking the student into the air.

Kicked by a stuffed animal, the student was naturally enraged. There, Rudel took off the headpiece and showed his real face. In an instant, the students around the stage went quiet.

'Ah!, by the way! If you try climbing on stage or doing anything mean to the participants, mister wolf will send you flying, so keep that in mind.'

The mc leaked a late warning. But this time, Rudel closed in on the mc. Seeing that scene, Eunius raised a grand laugh.

“That Rudel’s definitely telling him it’s a dog! And look. The guy he kick’s woken from his drink and turned pale!”

“Eunius, you’re laughing too much.”

Luecke tried to restrain Eunius, but on the contrary, when one of the three Lords was laughing so loudly, the hall was once more enveloped in laughter.

“Ooooh!! Millia’s coming out!! She looks kinda embarrassed, but that just makes it better!”

Aleist excitedly looked at Millia who entered the chaotic stage. She had covered her lower half in cloth, so it couldn’t be seen, but she was wearing a bikini with high exposure.

Her one leg and thigh that escaped the cloth had a sense of eroticism to it. Her embarrassment needlessly delighted the men more.

Apart from Aleist, the elf males had discarded their usual levelheadedness as they exploded in delight.

But Aleist’s other fiancés were taking part as well. They were looking at him so excited over Millia from their spots atop the stage.

Eunius covered his face with his left hand as he looked at the ceiling. Luecke looked at Aleist’s fiancés making eerie smiles on stage and pitied the man.

When the girls had put their all into appearing in the contest, Aleist had barely even looked at them.

But in the next instant, the men cried out.

“Hey! Oy!!”

“Hmm? Wha!?”

“Shirasagi-san, that’s too amazing...”

Izumi was the last to enter, and she entered wearing a considerably hazardous bikini. The one in question didn’t act as if she was particularly embarrassed.

Perhaps to match her hair, her black bikini covered an exceedingly small area. Apart from covering the important parts, it was almost all string.

One poor move, and perhaps something would come out, or so the guys hopes got up.

Rudel was wearing a costume, so even if he applauded, he could only let off a soft sound. By the way, the student who he kicked was nearby, being forced into clapping.

Among all the participants, Izumi was the most extreme.



With Izumi's entrance stealing away the flow all at once, Fina panicked within.

(Black hairrrr!! That woman casually pulled off what I could never do!!)

Fina had work a cute frilled swimsuit with low exposure. She and Mii them directed their eyes at the adult swimsuit Izumi wore.

Mii and Fina wore the same type of different colors. Their forms emphasized their youths, rousing intense popularity from a portion of the student body.

Fina did try to pick out something more extreme. But from her body build and atmosphere, and the fact she was royalty, she had chosen something cute and low in exposure.

For that choice held the highest prospects of victory. Contrived as it might be, it was also the right choice. In all actuality, there were many men directing their eyes at the two of them.

"Princess, Izumi-san is amazing."

Without any hidden sides, Mii really did think she was amazing. But Fina was different.

"Right. Amazing (Goddammit, to think she would choose something so extreme... master must have put her up to it! Oh, master, you really are so... adorable!)"

Seeing Rudel in his costume, Fina was so excited inside she thought she might leak her drool. If the chance presented itself, she thought she just might assault

him.

But the problem was that Rudel never left an opening. On the eyes of a hunter staring down its prey, Rudel felt a chill on his spine.

“Hmm? What’s this? I got the feeling something was aiming at me...”

As Rudel looked around in his costume, his movements excited Fina to no end.

And the curtains opened on the academy’s final event.

Chapter 94: The End of School Life and a New Problem Child

“Well now, that really was a splendid contest.”

“Yeah, I never thought it would be that extreme.”

A grinning Aleist and Eunius were discussing the beauty contest that had just come to a close. Luecke was nonchalantly nodding along.

“Those poses they struck in that last self-appeal session were nice. I never thought Izumi would make such a pose, but in the end, Millia won hands down.”

Right, it ended as Millia’s landslide victory.

To the end of the end, the tension born from her sheer embarrassment had caused her to fail. During her self-appeal session, she bit her tongue, and as she made a pose, she stepped on the long cloth wrapped around her waist.

By treading on that cloth, not only was it removed, her top bra was taken with it, making her pose one where she covered her chest with her hands. On its severity, she monopolized the votes of the male student body and won.

By the way, the runner-up was Fina, and following on from her, Izumi placed as well.

“Yeah, I’ll never forget that scene!”

Through his armor, Aleist clenched his fist victoriously. But as the beauty contest was over, of course, his fiancés had descended the stage.

Having changed from their swimsuits into their costumes, the girls were making dark smiles behind Aleist.

Luecke and Eunius decided to change location at once, going off to search for Rudel and Izumi. From behind, they could hear Aleist’s screams.

“Eh? No way! You were in it too? ... That was a joke! I’m just kidding!!
Aaaah!!”

Right as Aleist cried out, the two of them were able to spot Rudel and Izumi walking side by side.



‘Following on, it’s confession time!! Now that we’ve all got a spot of drink, everyone who wants to use this last chance at the academy to confess to the one they admire, raise your hands!!’

The mc was enthusiastic, but the hall wasn’t quite on board. Even if you asked them to confess at the end of the end, it would only be troubling.

In the first place, an extent of the students already had partners. If they were nobles, they’d have engagements, and based on the person, there were even some who, while students, surrounded themselves with numerous women.

First on that list were Aleist and Eunius.

The hall was enveloped in a dubious air, and there were only a few students who took part, half for fun. Within all that, some commoner students had gathered in a separate space.

Starting with Fritz, they were students of the three-year curriculum.

When it was decided Fritz would become captain of the royal guard, he had invited some of his close friends to join as well. Those who gathered with Fritz’ followers.

In that hall of dubious enthusiasm, he held a glass as he looked around.

“What’s wrong, Fritz? You’re not taking part?”

One of his classmates suggested that he take part in this side show. As captain of the royal guard, with more influence than the captain of a knight brigade, Fritz did have a certain level of popularity among the girls.

Especially the students who wanted to rise from commoners, and low-ranking nobles would often call out to him. But Fritz had Aileen, so he couldn’t participate in this sort of event.

“No, I’d rather not become a laughingstock in a farce like this. More importantly, this party isn’t free. Do those nobles really get it?”

While those around him exchanged jokes, Fritz alone hadn't read the mood.

"Yeah, y-you're right."

Following on from Fritz, the commoner knights who dreamed of promotion forcefully sternered up their faces. In truth, they at least wanted to enjoy their last days at the academy.

The eyes of that group with a dicey air fell on Rudel in his costume and Izumi.

They were smiling as they looked over the students confessing to boys in jest, and the students receiving those confessions not knowing they were jokes.

Fritz instantly down the juice that filled the glass in his hands.

"The noble-for-hobby who ignored the palace's orders to become a dragoon, and the foreign woman who seduced him. It's rotten, the current Kingdom of Courtois."

At a glance, Fritz' opinion wasn't correct, but it wasn't wrong either. If someone who didn't know looked at Rudel and Izumi, it certainly wouldn't be strange if they imagined such a relationship.

No matter how those two thought of one another.

"Hey, did Rudel really reject enlistment in the royal guard? Is that really allowed?"

As a weak-willed-looking one of his followers mouthed something that could be taken as supporting Rudel, Fritz' expression changed.

"We're dealing with a noble, and an archduke at that! You should know it isn't strange for them to do such a thing. Those rotten nobles have to do something for the sake of this country."

On Fritz' opinion, everyone nodded.

Even if he had an environment to learn, an environment to study, if he only looked at the information he wanted to believe, he could only strengthen his biased viewpoint.

Laughing (?) with his friends, Fritz glared at Rudel. But the two of them were exceedingly similar.

If Rudel didn't have anyone to believe in, there was a possibility he would fixate on becoming a dragoon and ruin himself. The difference was whether they were able to accept others or not.

Rudel who saw dreams of dragoons, and Fritz who dreamed of heroes.

After coming so far, the gap had grown so large it could no longer be filled in.

"I'm definitely going to change this country."

Glaring at Rudel who clung onto Izumi in his costume, Fritz muttered.



In the hall, making use of the confession time, Sophina had moved behind the scenes.

Obtaining the numbered tags that would be used in the king's game, Sophina appeared before Fina. The two of them met hidden in a corner of the hall, hurriedly going into preparations.

"Princess, the preparations are complete."

"You've done a splendid job. As expected of a high knight."

"... I am glad I was able to answer to your expectations. (Even if you praise me over something like this, it doesn't make me happy at all...)"

Swiftly sticking on a marker, Fina got a grasp of the characteristics of the other number tags. But that alone made her anxious, so she directed her face at Sophina.

Dropping her shoulders, Sophina quietly nodded.



'Now that those confessions are behind us, it's finally time to begin the king's game!! And what a discourteously named game it is, but we have Fina Courtois-sama's stamp of approval, so we're going with that! Don't be a stiff, and join in. Now then, Fina-sama will be participating in the first game.'

Alongside that enthusiastic introduction from the mc, Fina reservedly waved her hand as she walked to the center of the circle the students had made. To her side, Sophina escorted her as a guard.

“It is my pleasure.”

‘And while I’d like to put rank aside, we can’t start it off without our future archdukes!’

Being introduced, Rudel and the others stepped up as well. As Fina was taking part, they had selected out earnest participants who could read the mood for the first round.

While it was dubious whether or not Rudel could read the mood, there was no changing the fact he was earnest. But Aleist had been removed from the first round’s members.

‘Well then, you’ll all be drawing lots from this box! We’ll start off with Fina-sama.’

As he said that, the student on duty held out the box of numbered sticks to Fina. There were round tags stuck on the ends of each stick, and the tags indicated their number or king status.

“Then if you’ll beg my pardon (Fwahahaha!! I am the king!!)”

Picking out one of the sticks, Fina discreetly retrieved the marker she had stuck onto it. Pulling the king’s tag without issue, she resolved herself.

(Hmm, that was dangerous. I always lose focus when I get this far, and I was one step from doing something crazy. Today is my big chance to get master in my hands! If I fail here, it’ll be a real pain later.)

After Eunius and Luecke pulled numbers, Rudel was wearing his costume, so it was considerably hard to grasp one. On his gestures, Fina thought she would start drooling.

(Quit it, Fina! That’s just a fake fluffy. I have to hold a stalwart heart... and yet, I must hate myself for wanting to assault him!!)

Seeing Rudel grasp a stick in both hands and pull it, Fina fought the urges within her head. She thought her heart would be stolen by that cute appearance and bearing.

But even so, she didn’t let her guard down. She sent a glance at Sophina, who silently sent the signal to her high knight subordinates. One of the high knights

stationed behind Rudel confirmed the number on Rudel's lot.

For the sake of this day, she had stationed those with good eyes, even among all her subordinates. The abilities of these talented girls were being put to use in the king's game.

'Is everyone ready? Then who's the king~!!?'

As the mc raised his voice, Fina laughed inside that she had been waiting for this as she softly raised her hand. From appearance alone, she was a reserved beautiful girl.

As she was doing that, Fina informed her of the number on Rudel's stick. Carefully confirming it, Fina couldn't stop her laughter within. But as she directed her eyes at Rudel, she noticed a certain something.

"Um, it looks like it's me (Master's number is five... then the order...?)"

Chatting amiably with Luecke and Eunius, Rudel's outfit was cute, and there were no problems with his gestures. But something was lacking.

"The sort of order she gives in the first round will decide the flow for the rest of the game."

"For real? Then even a kiss is safe, right?"

"With the princess? I think that's completely out, Eunius."

"No, she could order one number to kiss another. Aleist has a talent when it comes to these sorts of things."

Luecke praised Aleist for proposing this game. But Aleist himself was currently receiving punishment for ruining his fiancés' moods during the beauty contest.

"Sure enough, if it's this game, then they could use it at the shops too. That guy just might be a genius!"

Eunius decided to start a trend at the shops he frequented. And with that, Aleist had left yet another legend.

"I don't have talent when it comes to these things. I'm a bit jealous."

Wearing his costume, Rudel made a bit of a thinking gesture. But even if Fina was satisfied with his appearance and cute gestures, she wasn't satisfied with

his speech.

If only his appearance wasn't as cute, if only his actions weren't so lovely.

(..... Unforgivable. That way of speech is unforgivable! If you've already gone that far, then do something about your speech!! Just a little more. A little more, and it'd be perfect!!)

'Well then, Fina-sama, if you'll please give an order!'

"Princess, your order please (Hah, forcing me to work in a party of young kids... I want to go home)"

Hearing Sophina's spiritless voice, Fina saw the completion of her goal of kissing Rudel appear before her eyes. But within Fina, a new desire was being born.

(Kissing master... but it's hard to abandon the thought of adding 'woof' to his sentences. Wait a second, Fina! You cannot be shaken here!)

As her heart came into conflict, the angel of her heart whispered out.

'What are you doing!? Fulfill your initial objective. Use this opportunity to obtain master!!'

There, the demon whispered in her ears.

'Hehe, are you sure? If you let this chance slip by, there might not be a next, you know? Kisses and sealing deals, you can do all manner of pervy things however you want afterward. Your authority exists to be abused, right? You have no choice but to add a woof to his words here and now!'

On the devil's words, the angel within Fina voiced her approval.

'Oh my, you do have a point. Then the right choice is to add 'woof' to his sentences! My word, this is splendidly arousing!!'

By the drooling angel and demon within Fina, her direction had been changed. Hardening her resolve, Fina boldly handed down her order with expressionless face.

And at that moment, Fina was shaken.



“Erk, she told me to add woof to the end of every sentence, woof.”

“Isn’t that fine? I think it’s cuter that way.”

The king’s game continued, but taking the number of students into account, there were few who could take part in each game. Rudel had left the game early, switching out with the students waiting their turn.

Having come so far, Fina’s objective ended in failure. But she was satisfied, so perhaps it wasn’t a problem.

Rudel-forced to add woof to his words-and Izumi parted from the place the king’s game was held to have a hand at the food. Luecke and Eunius were still playing, so the two of them were killing time.

It went without saying that the two men had created time for Rudel and Izumi to be together.

“Even so, your swimsuit was surprising, woof.”

“Y-you think? They said the participants could keep the swimsuit afterward, so I chose out the one I liked... did you dislike that swimsuit?”

“Not at all! ... woof. I thought it was really pretty, woof.”

Still wearing his dog costume, Rudel took Izumi’s hand. Izumi seemed happy Rudel had taken a liking to it.

“That’s good. I didn’t think it was a little extreme, but I’m glad I chose it.”

The one who chose the swimsuit was Izumi herself, and it seems she had considered it just a little extreme. Rudel went on to praise her swimsuit form.

“I got really excited. There was barely any string on your back, and it almost looked as if you weren’t wearing anything at all, woof! But if possible, I wouldn’t want you to show it to anyone else, woof.”

“Yeah, I’ll be careful.”

Giggling, Izumi found Rudel’s slightly frantic attitude to be quite pleasant.

There, having run away from his fiancés, Aleist came seeking help. He was wearing his armor, so when he moved, they could hear the sounds of clashing metal.

As Aleist was wearing something conspicuous, he decided to use Rudel, someone his fiancés couldn't approach so easily.

"S-save me, you two! At this rate, I'm going to have a hole in my stomach."

As Aleist appeared in lament, this time, Luecke and Eunius appeared. Both of them took Aleist in with weary eyes.

"Why don't you read the mood?"

"Read the mood, dammit."

To the words of the two who held the same impression, Aleist tilted his head. But even if he tilted his head in gold-horned black armor, it didn't look cute at all.



The hall was growing rowdy over the king's game.

A large number of students awaited their turn to take part, and Izumi had been detained by some underclassmen girls, separating from Rudel.

The four men had gathered by the wall, but Aleist had gotten some drink in him, and with his fatigue, he had fallen asleep against it.

"He really fell asleep."

As Eunius made a game of prodding Aleist with his finger, Luecke let out a sigh.

"Just leave him be. After they stuck to him like that, of course he'd be tired... good grief, he'll burn a hole in his stomach someday."

"Sure enough, woof."

As Rudel and the others said, Aleist's fiancés had launched their attack. They had contained their usual pace but even so, it seems they were hard on him.

"Ah, but his shouts during Millia's wardrobe malfunction were painful. He was chastised for them quite a bit, this guy."

Eunius was talking about the time Millia lost her upper garments. Excited, Aleist had some drink in his system, and he ended up shouting out.

From atop the stage, his engagement partners were all watching him. There

was no excuse.

“... Well, the way things are going, Millia will probably be engaged to Aleist too. Looking at the elves as a whole, this matter with Millia is a stroke of good luck. The talks should go forward regardless of her intent.”

Luecke tilted his glass, swishing the drink inside, and watching it move. Once talks turned serious, Eunius looked up at the ceiling.

Rudel alone, because of his costume, was unable to put out a serious air.

“Hah, becoming an adult means you’ve got to become a real stick in the mud, huh.”

Eunius down the contents of the glass in his hand, making a bit of a lonesome face.

“You can’t be a student forever. We’re the same. After this, we’ll be in service to the palace for a bit, but we’ve each got our factions.”

Originally, they were houses that were supposed to be in conflict. Even if Rudel was a separate story, the Arses House still held a faction. He couldn’t stay irrelevant.

“What a pain.”

On Eunius’ words, Luecke could give no response. But before that, Rudel had something he had to do.

His promise with the black fog... perhaps you could call it fate, if he didn’t fight against the large flow, he would never be able to move forwards.

“I’m a dragoon, woof. It’s customary to head to the border for a while... woof.”

“No, you’re special, so you’ll probably be serving at the palace, right? This sleeping guy is entering the defenders that were just put together, and he’s suddenly a candidate for captain.”

Eunius corrected Rudel’s statement, but Rudel had a vague understanding. There was a flow he couldn’t do anything against, and he was being swept up in its currents...

But he hadn't given up on his struggle.

He had promised to fight against it, and it was one of the reasons he became a dragoon. Rudel suddenly felt as if the still-human Sakuya was standing beside him.

(I'll definitely honor my promises.)

It was almost as if Sakuya made a bit of a sorrowful face. But the feeling she was there soon faded away.

"Well, as long as Rudel's there, the Arses faction should build some momentum. We won't be the two great factions for long. Rudel, you better prepare yourself. Even if you're the dragoon, you're the white knight. It's not like there's no possibility you'll be the next king. No, among us, you have the highest chances."

Luecke looked at Aleist just once. But he couldn't imagine the man leaning asleep against the wall becoming king.

"If you become king, you'll be clashing with us."

Even if Rudel became king, if their politics collided, then the archdukes would oppose. Friendly relations from their school days wouldn't mean anything there. No, those around wouldn't let them have meaning.

The three fell silent, but on Izumi's approach, Eunius opened his mouth.

"Well, it was fun. For now, I guess that's enough."

"Sure enough."

"That's right, woof."

Rudel was faithfully upholding his order. And that was something Luecke and Eunius couldn't help but laugh at.

The fact that they couldn't keep it tense to the end left the three of them laughing.



In the academy where the graduation ceremony had concluded, the headmaster held his head.

Having come so far, the students' guardians had come forth to complain that the party's contents had been too extreme. The name of the king's fame was approved by Fina, so it didn't become a problem.

But in the beauty contest, boys aside, the girls and their parents came to complain. This was largely because of Izumi and Millia.

While they couldn't approve of the contest itself, they complained that they couldn't approve of those extreme pieces of swimwear either. Among them were some of the students who took part, simply being sore losers.

And while confession time did become a bit of a problem, among the students, there were some boys who jokingly confessed to one another, and it was praised as being funnier than the average comedy.

No one said anything particular about the costumes, but after that, the academy received a considerable number of complaints.

The fact that they were praised to an extent was the silver lining on a dark cloud. It was well known as a party where the students had made lasting memories.

Of the enrolled students, there were many looking forward to next year's party.

"Come this far, to think my sense of relief would backfire... I never would have thought Izumi-kun and Millia-kun would..."

It's not as if they hadn't been wary of Rudel and co, but the problem had come from somewhere they had never even expected, making the headmaster hold his head.

"Hah... well, there's only one year left in my term. It did make for a nice memory."

Recalling when Rudel had come to the academy, his face went unusually lax. It was quite some trouble, but remembering how it was fun in its own way, the headmaster continued through his processing of complaints.

... But because of the problem child who paid visit to the academy two years later, the headmaster's troubles would continue.

That the problem child would cause his term to be extended was something the headmaster had no way of knowing.

“Now then, I’ve got to do my best for my final year.”

Chapter 95: New Comrades and Superiors

From early in the morning, a large number of knights had gathered at the palace.

They were all prim and proper, and even the sounds of voices couldn't be heard.

In the country of Courtois, the appointment ceremony of its elites-the high knights, dragoons... and royal guard-was carried out in April. This was a standing tradition and the unchanging start of the year for all knights.

Those with excellent grades at the academy, those whose efforts as knights were evaluated, and those who had accumulated achievements were chosen as elites, and given the right to attend the ceremony.

Here, the new knights to represent Courtois were lined up.

Rudel was boldly lined shoulder to shoulder with them. Unlike his time as a student, his arms had passed through the sleeves of the official dragoon ceremonious knight garments.

If anything differed, it was that he was there as one from an archduke house, lined up in the very front row, his ceremonial knight clothing made of valuable white material. From the fabric to the gold decorations, even among the knight clothes the craftsmen had prepared for the elites, his was surely of the highest workmanship.

He stood by Aleist, who was participating as an exception, and they certainly stood out.

Aleist's enlistment in the defenders was decided. But there was no way they could have the black knight-a key figure in the nation's founding-not take part in the ceremony.

As if to contrast Rudel, he wore truly beautiful knight garments fashioned with black as the base and silver ornaments.

Perhaps he was nervous as his face was serious to no end.

Since their graduation from the academy, starting with Rudel, Luecke, Eunius, Aleist, Izumi... and Fritz had been granted extravagant knight clothing to stand in the ranks.

It was rare for graduates to line in the ceremony on that very same year, and apart from Rudel's group, the others were those who had put in at least a few years of knight work and had their efforts or achievements recognized.

But it wasn't unprecedented for early academy graduates to stand among them.

Called a genius, Cattleya stood for her ceremony when she was only seventeen.

What's more, that was after she was forcibly graduated like Fritz. When Cattleya obtained her red dragon, the dragoons were a majority gray dragons with very few natural ones.

For the dragoon knight brigade that prided their contracts with dragons, to speak to the contrary, a lack of natural dragon contractors could raise doubts that the organization was weakening.

It came at a bad time, and Cattleya was held up high as a genius.

In that reception hall where Rudel and the others stood in file, the high ceiling was held up by large pillars. Prepared for the day's ceremony, the carpet was brand new.

The morning air was, at most, cool on their skins, and the lined knights felt it gave just the right feel. Rudel could feel himself growing tense.

In such a hall, the orchestra informed them of the king's appearance.

There were other authorities walking behind him as he came out before the knights.

Without the slightest signal, those elite knights simultaneously fell to their knees and lowered their heads to signal their devotion. The king was satisfied with those splendid movements.

Moving just his eyes, the king looked at Rudel in his bright knight garments.

(So he's finally come this far. He does seem to be quite the stubborn one, but

that's all the better.)

Seeing Rudel who hadn't given up to the end and had become a dragoon, the king rejoiced without changing his expression. Rudel had sent a letter saying he would save much more people as a dragoon than as an archduke.

The king himself had a hand in the royal guard that would break that promise. But by his daughter's secret dealings, those plans went largely amiss and he became a dragoon.

As one of the authorities signaled the start of the ceremony, the proceedings went on in solemnity.



After the ceremony, the new recruits were gathered in the rooms allotted to each knight brigade.

From their status, Luecke and Eunius had special standings, and treating it as training, the two of them would spend a few years at the palace. Luecke as a civil official and Eunius as a military officer, they would be stationed in normal knight brigade.

But the two of them were future archdukes. Despite being newcomers, they were granted considerable posts.

Rudel sat in the dragoon meeting room alongside the other new recruits as he awaited the captain's arrival. This year, there was a change in captain and it was decided that they would use this opportunity to reorganize their formation.

The newbie dragoons calmly awaited the captain and vice-captain's arrival. It was there that the meeting room's door was slammed open with good momentum.

Before everyone could feel surprised, they stood from their seats and corrected their postures.

"Oh! That's quite a nice reaction. Looks like I can count on this year."

A middle-aged man of tidily kept beard looked over the faces of the new recruits and nodded. His hair was silver, all swept to the back, while his face was pristine.

He was shorter in stature than the vice-captain, but he had a muscular build.

In contrast, the vice-captain had a scar on his face. His orange, wavy long hair was collected at the back, and tall in height, he brought to mind the image of a seasoned warrior.

A light captain and a reliable vice-captain- that was the impression the newcomers held.

“Captain, promptly tell them of our schedule henceforth. I have work to do.”

To that vice-captain, whose intensity even reached his voice, that captain pat him on the shoulder as he informed him he would go at his own pace.

“Don’t be so stiff, Alejandro. Deepening our friendship with these guys is included in our job description! Your daughter’s here too, and if you don’t tell the men not to lay a hand on her, she’ll be eaten right up.”

“Oldart, shouldn’t you be the one doing something about that loose personality of yours?”

From the vice captain’s fed-up face, the captain turned to the new recruits. Directing his white teeth, he commenced his self-introduction.

“I’m Oldart Billums, high and mighty captain of the dragoon brigade. I’m a charmer in his prime turning forty-eight this year, you better remember that. By the way, my partner’s a gray dragon.”

Once he finished a light introduction, Oldart looked at his vice-captain.

“... Alejandro Campbell. My partner is a wind dragon.”

Once he finished his simple introduction, Alejandro handed the documents he brought to one of the new recruits. That nearby newbie took his share before circulating the rest of the forms.

His eyes fell only once on a female knight, but those around didn’t pay it any particular mind. Oldart alone was directing him a detestable grin.

After making an unpleasant face, Alejandro gave a simple explanation of what was to come.

“During the new recruit training, the previous generation’s captain and vice-

captain will serve as instructors and lead you. There will be other active members serving as instructors, and they will pound the fundamentals of being a dragoon into you within the next half year.”

Oldart crossed his arms, nodding as he added onto the explanation.

“In half a year, we’ll have an unveiling to the public. Though we’ll just be flying in formation around the palace. Until then, you’ll be doing grunt work for three months! And in the remaining three months, you’ll be mastering flying in formation. By the way! I made sure all the active dragoons instructing you are manly men!”

The new recruits reacted poorly to those words. Rudel simply wondered if there was a reason he wouldn’t make a woman instructor.

“This year, we have a future archduke coming in, and the higher-ups told us to let our beauts teach him... that would make me jealous as hell, so I decided to do some harassment.”

As Oldart confessed his true feelings with a smile, Alejandro felt the urge to spit out a sigh.

“This year’s been a stream of unprecedented events. I doubt it’ll go as it does every year, so you should all keep that fact in your heads. Be at ease until the instructor arrives. We’re going, captain.”

“Already? Whatever. Well then, new recruits, we’ll meet again soon.”

After Oldart left the room laughing, the unsociable Alejandro followed behind.

Once the captain and vice-captain’s footsteps grew distant, a single young man loosened the collar of his knight clothing as he sat in his seat. With chestnut hair, he gave off the impression of an amiable young man.

“That vice-captain has some intensity... though I get the feeling the captain is a bit too light.”

As the young man unraveled his impression of the two, a nearby female knight sat and began talking about the captain.

“Sure enough. Having a gray dragon for captain and a wind dragon for vice-

captain, it's a peculiar tale."

The nine newcomers in the conference room sat in their chairs at ease, and as it was a break time, they began to converse.

"And we're even getting a future archduke entering this year. You're Rudel, aren't you?"

A knight with gray hair and a sharp look in his eyes looked at Rudel, taking on a provocative attitude. The surrounding knights were surprised by his bearing, but Rudel didn't flinch.

"Yeah, I'm Rudel. So?"

"Don't be so cold. From here on, we're going to be fellow dragoons, right? I hate all that stiff, serious stuff, see. And we've got another interesting one with us this year."

The knight with sharp eyes directed his gaze at the female knight with orange, wavy long hair.

"You're Enora Campbell, aren't you? Having a father and daughter both become dragoons is amazing."

"... That has nothing to do with it."

As the knight with sharp eyes called out her name, Enora reacted without any particular change in her reaction. While those gathered here were all elite knights, they were just a bit idiosyncratic.

Rudel knew about the Campbell House, and he had some interest in the name that put out dragoons generation after generation.

"The Campbell House is famous for turning out many dragoons. Do they make you do anything special?"

"Ah, that sounds interesting."

The knight who was the first to open his mouth endorsed Rudel's question, leaning his torso over the meeting room table. Enora was of ample chest and fine features.

Even though she wore the same uniform, from her measurements, it looked

as if she almost wore a completely different one from the other female knights. And yet, her waist was slim, and her limbs were slender.

Such a girl smiled as she answered all the knights in the room looking at her.

“That’s a secret.”

“Now that’s unfortunate.”

Rudel shrugged his shoulders, but it wasn’t as if he was expecting her to tell him from the start. He just wanted to converse with the other dragoons who would become his colleagues.

The other knights were also just a little let down by her words. There weren’t any who intended to pry any further.

As expected of those chosen as elite knights, they were all relatively calm and collected. And like that, the break time ended with some light conversation and self-introductions.



“I cannot accept it! Why wasn’t I chosen!?”

The one who captured the captain and vice-captain as they walked down the hall was Cattleya. Having returned from the border and been officially appointed head of a platoon, she had the qualifications to train the new recruits.

She had personally volunteered to help train the newbies of the term.

The fact Rudel was there was part of the reason, but newbie training was a required prerequisite for promotion. If she wanted to aim higher than lieutenant, Cattleya would have to carry out newbie rearing.

Within the brigade, Cattleya had gained strength and distinguished herself, and Oldart dealt with her with a smile.

“No, well... right! This and that happened between you and Rudel so we took it into consideration. I mean, when you were formerly engaged, the other side broke off the engagement, right? Man, the captain really has to read the mood in this sort of thing, you know.”

Cattleya was once a candidate to be Rudel's fiancé. After she raised a problem, the talks were broken off by the Arses House.

"Ah, that's already gone and done with. Or do you think I intend to get revenge?"

At Cattleya's words, Oldart laughed within.

(No, it's because I do think so that you were removed. Have you forgotten what happened a few years ago?)

By the confusion Cattleya caused, the dragoon brigade went through a period of turbulence. A few years back, Oldart headed a battalion.

He had memories of the considerable strife he had to go through with countermeasure meetings and human resources.

This time, Alejandro admonished Cattleya with a tired expression.

"This time, the higher-ups told us to treat our archduke with care. It is my belief that the knights we selected as instructors are a sensible lot. You're still young. You can try again for an instructor position next year."

But the real reason Cattleya didn't become an instructor wasn't Rudel. Alejandro had used Rudel as a reason to persuade Oldart, but the real reason was Cattleya's youth, and his daughter Enora.

Praised as a genius, Cattleya was undoubtedly an outstanding talent, even within the dragoons.

Age-wise, she was twenty-three, and even younger than some of the new recruits this term. Rudel was the youngest recruit, but apart from him, many of the others were over twenty-five. And Cattleya was the same age as Enora.

Becoming a dragoon at seventeen, she had put in six years of service. More than anything, she was capable of using her demonic sword. Given a few years, Alejandro was certain she would even surpass him.

For her dragon she had contracted a young, powerful male, and as a dragoon, Cattleya's value was exceedingly high.

As Alejandro looked at Cattleya, he felt a sense of panic. While being of a famed name that put out dragoons generation after generation, his daughter

was at the end of her talent

Even when he returned home, he couldn't help but see an unfavorable comparison. Those feelings would come out in his attitude, and it would often end in him mentioning Cattleya's name to Enora.

(Even if it's my responsibility, we can't go like this.)

He had intended to raise her worthy of being a dragoon, but Alejandro had noticed the darkness in Enora's heart. While she usually looked meek, Enora held an extraordinary sense of hostility towards Cattleya.

This time, Rudel-who held relations with Cattleya-was also instated as a dragoon.

"See? That's just how it is, this time around. Well, if you want to do it no matter what, you could help this charming captain in his prime practice his night flying skills..."

"I refuse."

"... Even if I knew it wouldn't work out, getting such an immediate response is painful. Try being a bit more tactful. I'm a delicate man."

"A delicate man doesn't say such indecent things."

Among the dragoons, night flying was just the sort of innuendo it sounded to be.

"... That's why you can never get a boyfriend."

"Oy, even for a captain, there are things you should and shouldn't say. Do you want me to explain certain things to your wife again?"

"H-hey! That's a no go! Now that one's one of the things you shouldn't say!!"

"It's only because your conduct is so bad, that you would be troubled by such a thing, charmer in his prime (lol)."

"Then I'd better watch out. I wouldn't want to be blasted off to the border like you, genius (lol)."

The two of them glared at one another, continuing on their comedy routine.

While Alejandro was mulling over his daughter, Oldart and Cattleya had

started such a back and forth. Alejandro looked enviously at his ability to get together the strong personalities of the dragoons.

Chapter 96: The Rival and the Evaluation

Having become a high knight, Izumi's first job was to clean up the room the high knights used at the palace.

As there was no longer the required personnel to maintain the organization, a notice of its official dissolution had been handed down. The guard of important personnel the high knights had risked their lives on had been taken up by the royal guard.

Promptly after entering the force, Izumi was put to processing documents.

"Hah, this is definitely not what I was expecting."

In the reference room the high knights used, Izumi muttered as she tidied up forms alongside the other high knights. From the start, she had become a high knight to become a noble.

But this year, there were absolutely no high knights who came from the noble class.

Factional disputes were already going on within the palace. As nobles, the archdukes leading the two great factions, and Archduke Arses who planned to use both of them had started to move.

Knight brigades... within military circles, there was a recruitment war going on between the royal guard and defenders.

The only ones you could call irrelevant were the dragoons. Due to their special standing, neither force could carelessly pull them from their positions.

Having the dragoons feud amongst themselves and cutting the number of dragons would be akin to largely chipping away the country's military might. At the same time, the royal line and authorities greatly feared the dragons turning against Courtois.

As it stood, the dragoons had a tacit rule of noninterference.

For the sake of Courtois' superiority, while they didn't fully understand the situation, the royal guards and defenders hadn't lain hands on them. Fina

herself did want to try reaching out, but in the end, she stopped herself.

That was simply how vital the pillars of the country, the dragoons, were.

In contrast, the status of the high knights had been snatched up by the royal guard.

No one could have imagined they would decline so much in only a few years. It was a result of the organization being cornered into dissolution by both Aileen and Fina simultaneously.

For Aileen, it was for her own sake.

Fina for her own desires, and just a little for the sake of the country...

When the high knights once shouldered the protection of vital personnel, this treatment was simply terrible.

But the high knights were elites. Their wisdom went without question, and they were the capable elites of Courtois. After the organization's dismantlement, their members would undoubtedly find work in one of the two fronts.

Through simple chat, Izumi had also come to know the circumstances of the palace. Feeling anxiety for her own future, Izumi began cleaning up when a voice called out to her from behind.

"Oh, Izumi, you're working hard."

"Yes. Is something the matter, senpai?"

The ones who came over to her were senior members of the high knights. A group of three and fresh nobles without any backers.

"No, I just wanted to know if you're free after this. Someone I know from the royal guard called out. You at least want to hear them out, right?"

They weren't hitting on her, it seems they wanted to carry Izumi over to the royal guard. In the intensifying recruitment wars to come, they wanted to gather as many people and contribute as much as possible.

"No, I'm..."

Izumi took on a refuting attitude. Through Rudel, she had already found a

station with Luecke and Eunius. The two of them had promised to mediate if Izumi's clan wanted to come under their one of their factions.

"That so, well, you better think over where you're going in the near future."

The party of three left; they wouldn't push her too hard. They weren't selected as high knights for nothing, and they knew what would happen if they overdid their movements.

But the fact that such solicitation would come out on the job was proof that the high knight brigade was growing lax as a whole.

"Even if you tell me about the royal guard and defenders..."

While she knew the general gist of things, Izumi didn't know the specifics. If she knew this was a petty sibling fight within the palace, she would surely drop her shoulders in disappointment.

Speaking to scale, it couldn't even be called a fight anymore. Within such a situation, Izumi plainly continued on her work.



"Well then, henceforth we will be putting your abilities to the test. Just because you've managed to contract a dragon, they alone won't make you a first-rate dragoon. Don't forget that you lot are merely standing on the starting line!"

Before the former captain and vice-captain, the nine new recruits saluted in file.

It was a training ground a long way off from the palace, and not in ceremonious garb, the newbies with training clothes wrapped around their bodies had come to the field without their dragons.

"From here on, you lot will be looking after the dragons as you learn the basics. What's needed of a dragoon is the ability to lead a dragon to your will. No matter how strong a dragon may be, if you cannot use its power, you won't be the slightest use in battle."

The vice-captain took a single large leap before taking a few more steps in the air.

In that empty airspace, his form almost as if he was kicking the atmosphere left the newbies surprised. Before the surprised new recruits, the former captain gave a proud explanation.

It was almost as if he was looking at his past self, and he felt a sense of nostalgia.

“This is only the beginning. At the very least, you will have to be able to carry out two mid-air movements. This one is mainly an emergency recovery measure for when you fall off your dragon. Well, it does have its uses in battle. Now then, those who can already use this technique, step forward. We’ll have you set a good example for the other new recruits.”

Watched over by the instructors, Rudel and Enora stepped forwards.

This was largely expected and the instructors wanted to confirm their abilities. Each year, there would always be an extent of new recruits who could pull it off.

But they generally wouldn’t carry the necessary techniques with them.

What the vice-captain showed off was nothing more than the minimum. Once the new recruits proudly unveiled their midair movement, he would show off an even higher level of movement.

Here, Enora took four air jumps before landing full of confidence.

On top of the graceful form of a beauty flying through the sky, the male knights’ attention was especially devoted to her large, swaying chest.

“How was that?”

After directing a provocative smile to the instructors, Enora switched out with Rudel. Seeing Rudel a little tense, she smiled and offered some advice.

“You should really relax your shoulders.”

“Ah, thank you.”

As she passed Rudel by, Enora predicted he might even fail. He was the youngest one among them, and he didn’t look to have much battle experience... she thought.

The instructors who received the report that Rudel had mastered air movement had been a little naïve as well. They thought that those seeing the technique for the first time might have overevaluated him.

But as Rudel leapt above the training grounds, the first thing that surprised everyone was the height.

“... Now that’s high (No, isn’t that a bit too high? Jumping that high is usually impossible, isn’t it).”

On the former captain’s words, no one was able to react. Rudel climbed to a considerable height and began executing air movement.

A small point seen from the ground seemed to be carrying out impossible fluctuations. Rather than a jump, he was already flying.

“... Oy, someone go set an example as his senior (That’s not happening).”

The former vice-captain’s words caused the active dragoons to shake their heads at once.

“Not happening! That one’s impossible!! And aren’t you supposed to set an example, vice-captain!?”

“I’m getting old. I can’t be getting in the way of you young’uns forever (Oy, oy, I’m begging you, read the mood a bit, Rudel-sama).”

As the former vice-captain and the active dragoons selected as instructors began to argue, the former captain muttered in his heart.

(This guy... what am I supposed to say.)

Within all that, Enora alone directed Rudel a gaze not of praise. What dwelled in her eyes was an intense hostility.

To Enora who was raised to be more of a dragoon than anything else, Rudel who boasted abilities that exceeded hers was simply unpleasant.

As if glaring, she watched Rudel fly freely through the sky.



The place the dragons were kept was called the dragon stables.

Around when evening was fading away, Rudel and the other new recruits

were cleaning those very stables.

While there were exclusive caretakers, it was regulation that the newbies would spend their time cleaning the stables for the first three months. There was no denying the fact the dragons were lifeforms. They generally smelled, and there were dirty places to be found.

In such a space, Rudel almost felt like breaking into a hum.

Despite being the eldest son of an archduke house, the drive he held as he carried out odd jobs caused those around to see him as an odd one.

“Oy, I’m surprised you can clean so happily. When I thought you would be the first one to snap at our superiors. Hah, looks like I’ve lost this bet.”

“Bet?”

The sharp-eyed knight, Saas Venia, revealed he had been placing bets with the other newcomers.

“That’s right. With the brat with the light personality and the two women, we placed our bets. Over how long you were going to hold out. And then you’re pleasantly cleaning the stables? Looks like Enora’s the only winner here.”

“Ah, the Campbell House’s... in that case, she thought I would hold out. How rare.”

The way things had gone up to now, Rudel found it more understandable for people to doubt him. Being evaluated by a person he didn’t really know left him a little lost.

But if it was a bet, then perhaps she aimed for the greatest turnout, or so he changed his train of thought.

“Now then, once this is cleaned up, we can call it a day.”

Once Saas tried to bring the cleaning to the end, the other newbies increased their pace. Rudel thought he felt Enora’s gaze, but she was conversing with the only other of the two female knights.

“I’m going off to look at my own dragon.”

“Again? Well, that kid’s a special one.”

Saas directed his gaze outside the dragon stables at the conspicuously large hole that had been dug out. In it was a dragon that even the splendidly constructed stables couldn't contain.

A subspecies of gaia dragon, Sakuya was even bigger than the standard gaia, and if she entered the dragon stables, there was a fear of her breaking the building.

For that sake, as an exception, it was permitted for Sakuya to dig a hole and use it as a place to sleep.

As Rudel approached, Sakuya popped her head out of the depths of the cave hole. If it was a small animal, it would've been cute, but Sakuya was a dragon. What's more, her size was double that of the other dragons.

If any layman saw her, they'd surely be at a loss for words. But to Rudel, she was the dragon he had made a contract with.

"I kept you waiting, Sakuya."

'I'm hungry... this place doesn't give enough food.'

For Sakuya who ate quite a portion, the palace had prepared a considerable portion. But it does seem it still wasn't enough for her.

"I see, in that case, I'll tell the instructor."

Right after Rudel made a pampering remark, the roar of a dragon came from the stables. While Rudel couldn't understand the contents of that roar, Sakuya did seem to make an unpleasant face.

"What's wrong?"

'... It's nothing. I'm going to sleep for the day, good night Rudel.'

"Y-yeah, good night."

Normally, they would enjoy a conversation there, but lately, Sakuya was lacking in spirit. When Rudel became a dragoon, it was decided Sakuya would live in the stables.

While she dug a hole and lived there as an exception, for some reason, she seemed to be losing energy day after day.

She was in high spirits when she left the forest where the dragons lived. While Rudel was a little worried, he decided to wait for the time when Sakuya would divulge her own worries.

If he worried too much, he thought it would have an opposite effect and make Sakuya overly conscious.

He did know she was hiding something and making sure he wouldn't find out.

After spending some time cleaning up the front of the cave, Rudel took his leave. He was definitely mulling over Sakuya, but for now, he didn't know any resolution.

She didn't seem to be sick, so he suspected it was something psychological.

(Is she stressed out from a change in environment? But she was delighted at the start.)

Troubling his head over Sakuya, Rudel returned to the dragon stables.



In the instructor room, the former captain and vice captain were exchanging a drink

It was passed working hours, and they planned to sleep after downing a glass. Watching over the new recruits was left to the other active dragoons.

"Hah, even so, this year is a hard one."

"Right you are."

Both poured a slightly-expensive wine in their glass before drinking it down. Reaching their hands to the snacks left on the table, they began discussing Rudel.

"Does the archduke even need training? Why not just add him to the main force already?"

"That's going to be a hard one."

They exchanged bitter smiles as they evaluated the year's new recruits.

"The runner-up is Enora, and next, I guess Saas is showing a bit of promise? For now, I don't know about the others."

“They’re elites chosen by dragons but, well, there’s still a ranking to things. The two who managed to obtain wild dragons will definitely support the core force in times to come.”

Being recognized by a wild dragon was several times harder and more dangerous than contracting a gray dragon. The dragoons who succeeded in such a task were truly outstanding talents.

“From tomorrow onwards, training’s gradually going to grow harsher, but let’s see... I guess a B-Rank evaluation is guaranteed.”

A dragoon was evaluated on a five level evaluation system ranging from E to A. While all of them held competence as knights, dragoons were mainly focused around dragons.

Controlling a dragon freely was what made one first-rate.

“So I’m sure.”

But managed by the dragoons, gray dragons would move faithfully. Wild dragons were hard to handle, but in exchange, they boasted performance greater than a gray dragon.

While they had placed their expectations on Rudel and Sakuya, in the evaluation exam held a few weeks from that day, the two of them received a D-Rank evaluation.

Chapter 97: The Evaluation and Running Away

‘Rudel Arses... Evaluation: D-Rank’

As he looked at the document indicating his evaluation, Rudel’s expression was serious.

Sakuya was also out on the training grounds, but her wings and tail unfit for her large build were folded in. Perhaps discouraged, her expression was somewhat dark.

‘I-I’m sorry.’

“Don’t mind it. I don’t really care.”

The reason Rudel’s evaluation was so low lay in his partner Sakuya. A gaia dragon subspecies, Sakuya was specialized in offense and defense.

While she was bad at flying, she possessed skills to make up for it. But as a dragoon’s dragon, she was a failure.

No matter how proficient Rudel might be, if Sakuya’s evaluation was so low, he would never rise in rank.

Sakuya had received training from Marty’s dragon Mystith, but that wasn’t for long. It was hard to say she had learned all of the necessary skills. Even more than that, there were skills the dragoons had polished after Mystith had left.

Starting with ‘hovering’- stopping on the spot in midair-things like flight formations hadn’t been necessary in Mystith’s era.

Now that group combat had become the norm, a majority of the fighting techniques Mystith taught her were outside of the grading scale.

‘But if we don’t become C-Rank (?) we can’t go out in battle...’

Right, just barely obtaining D-Rank, Rudel and Sakuya wouldn’t be able to enter the fray. It meant they couldn’t escape the label of newbie.

While Rudel possessed the necessary abilities of a dragoon, Sakuya was just somehow able to manage a D.

“Don’t worry. We just have to raise our rank by one. And you don’t have to worry about the evaluation.”

Rudel tried to console Sakuya, but there he heard yet another grand dragon cry from the direction of the dragon stables. The fact it was different from a normal roar made Rudel curious.

Every time Sakuya heard that cry, she would lose her spirit. Conversations would cut off.

“What’s wrong?”

‘... It’s nothing.’

Even through the conveyance of thought that came between contractors, the weakening of the ends of Sakuya’s words bothered Rudel. He grew excessively anxious.

“If something’s wrong, then tell me. You’re my precious partner.”

‘Y-yeah.’

While Rudel worried for Sakuya’s lack of energy, in contrast, Sakuya only grew more depressed.



Enora watched Rudel cheer Sakuya up from afar.

“Serves you right.”

On the words she spat out, the dragon she had contracted to looked at Sakuya.

‘A kid with a story from Mystith’s place? Looks like he likes her quite a bit. I do have some sympathy for her upbringing, but I don’t have the mind to support her to such an extent.’

Mystith was the most powerful dragon in the dragon dwellings, but her territory was surprisingly small. When there were dragons that followed her, it was only natural there would be those opposed.

Enora’s dragon was one of those opposing ones.

In order to look after her own dragon, Enora removed her gaze from Rudel

and Sakuya. Unstrapping the tools used at the training grounds, her expression turned to a dark smile.

It was a huge difference from her usual self.

“No matter how proficient he is as a knight, that’s no good at all.”

‘If she can’t even fly properly and her breath is so half-baked, then there’s no helping it.’

In order to commence air raids, it was necessary for a dragon to accurately hit a mark with their breath. Within all that, Sakuya was terrible at firing her breath during flight.

Even if her output was on the high side, her accuracy was exceedingly low. Even if Rudel was controlling, she rarely ever hit.

“It’s fatal to have a D evaluation at the three-month point. There’s no way they can add him to the flight formation. This future archduke sure has fallen. There’s a reassessment exam next week, but that’s definitely not something at a level he can do anything about.”

The fundamental training had ended, and now, they would have to learn to fly in formation for the unveiling event. But at present, Sakuya’s abilities hadn’t reached that level.

‘Well, being this bad is an embarrassment to our kin. The grays are making a ruckus.’

“Hmm~.”

Seeing the ones she thought would be her greatest rivals-Rudel and Sakuya-be the biggest failures among the newcomers, Enora was delighted. Her wind dragon explained what the gray dragons he scorned as grays were doing to Sakuya.

‘You never see a wild dragon this terrible, after all. The jeers are flying left and right. It’s unbearably noisy.’

“Now isn’t that nice. If that’s all it takes to crush them, they have my thanks. But I can’t stumble in a place like this.”

Within Enora’s head, she had already lost interest in Rudel. But her hostility

towards Cattleya who she was constantly compared to burned bright.

While she did hold a high evaluation of Rudel himself, if his dragon was no good, there was no point in paying him any mind.



On his lodging house bed, Rudel looked at the evaluation notice as he desperately searched for a solution.

“Hovering... halting in the air for a fixed amount of time. Shooting... destroying the marks set up while in flight. If we accomplish these two, then we can get a C-Rank.”

Rudel looked at the documents attached to the evaluation notice and looked over two entries. While there were other shoddy places as well, he would have to do something about those two points that were evaluated highly as the essentials.

To be honest, Rudel didn't care about rank. There wasn't a problem as long as he could go out in battle. In this instance, it was fine even if he couldn't take part in the flight formation.

But Sakuya was depressed.

“I have to do something to give her self-confidence. If I do... no, it won't be a problem! Just what am I thinking.”

Leaping up from his lying position, Rudel rushed straight off to Sakuya.



Once the day of the reevaluation came around, surrounded by the instructors, the other newcomers and their dragons, Rudel and Sakuya went into preparations.

“Alright, we're doing it just as planned, Sakuya!”

‘Yeah!’

Confirming his preparations were complete, Rudel turned to an instructor and sent a signal. There, the instructor gave the order for him to commence hovering.

Rather than Enora who had lost interest, the sharp-eyed Saas seemed strangely unsettled as he looked at Rudel.

“Will they be alright?”

There, the knight standing to his side poked fun.

“You’re more of a worrywart than you look. Well, let’s just see how far they’ve managed to come in a week.”

The knight of light personality relaxed as he looked at Rudel and Sakuya. First came the hovering evaluation but here, Rudel took an action no one expected.

Of all things, he produced one of his specialties, a shield of light.

“... The hell’s he doing?”

While someone muttered, Sakuya leapt up and mounted that shield. That form as if a dragon was riding a board left everyone dumbfounded.

One of the instructors loudly verified it with Rudel.

“W-what are you doing!? Get to hovering at once!”

Rudel also answered loudly.

“There is no problem! The assessment entry describes it as, ‘halting in the air for a fixed period of time’! And see? We’ve stopped, haven’t we!?”

Sakuya was just sitting on the shield of light Rudel had produced. She wasn’t doing anything.

“No, that’s true! But that’s not what we had in mind!!”

Seeing the instructor’s troubled face, the surrounding newbies gave bitter smiles. But Enora alone made a mortified face.

“To think he would come out with such a means!”

The other female newbie looked at her face from the side.

“No, is this really where you should be angry? More than that, isn’t it a laugh?”

Enora Campbell was quite off herself.



Following on, the shooting evaluation test commenced.

In the place prepared for shooting practice, there were only dragoon facilities around.

The goal was to hit the brick walls erected along the flight path. Those walls were made strong, making sure even a dragon's breath wouldn't be able to destroy them.

Destroying the walls wasn't the objective, the aim was to demolish the planks posted up on those walls. They were made just strong enough that a dragon wouldn't be able to break them if it wasn't serious.

Flying at a certain level of speed, they would have to destroy the marks set up.

Once the ten targets were successfully posted, the instructor issued Rudel the order.

Sakuya flew off into the distance to build up speed.

With that previous hovering case, the instructors were worried whether or not Rudel would do something. Not just the brick walls, the targets themselves were made difficult to destroy by human hands, so they had some piece of mind. As Sakuya was terrible at hitting marks, the instructors and new recruits watching took more distance than usual.

Saas worried in a different way than before as he muttered. As expected, the knight with the light personality responded.

"It'll be alright this time, won't it?"

"No, even if you ask me... but that last one was interesting. Sure enough, he wasn't wrong, so perhaps he might just pass."

Raising her speed, Sakuya passed down the designated route, approaching the target.

But even when the mark entered the firing range of a normal breath, Sakuya didn't even try to fire. At her mouth, she was either preparing to fire a breath, or simply gathering mana.

"... Isn't it a bit large?"

As an ill-natured knight muttered, without aiming at the mark, Sakuya continued to come closer and closer. The mana converging in her mouth was exceedingly large.

Not a single shot fired, Sakuya flew right up to the first target.

“What are they doing!?”

Saas was worried, but outside of the surrounding worry, under Rudel’s orders, Sakuya dropped that mass of mana.

Sakuya was unable to fire a powerful breath from the air. Taking that into account, Rudel hit upon the idea that instead of firing it, he could just do an airdrop.

Rudel had chosen to clear this challenge by dropping a lump of mana right over the target. Rather than risking holding back too much to aim at the target, he bet it all on a single powerful blow.

As that spherical lump of mana fell, Sakuya instantly fled into the sky. Seeing her rise in altitude, the instructors turned to the newbies and cried out.

“E-evacuattte!”

From their experience, the instructors determined that mass of magic was dangerous. They turned to the recruits and ordered them to retreat.

All called their dragons, and it was at the moment everyone tried to flee the area. The mass of mana didn’t fall on the target.

As it found its destination in the very center of all those scattered targets, a cloud of smoke and shockwave ruled the space. Following on, the sound of explosions turned the area into a sea of fires.

... The explosions took it all in, swallowing down the targets on the walls in its wake.

The training ground was reduced to scorched earth.

Luckily, there were no injuries, but everyone gathered could only look upon the scene in mute amazement.

“We did it, Sakuya! With this, we’ve risen in rank!”

Descending upon the barren ground, Rudel and Sakuya rejoiced that they had destroyed all the targets, wall and all. Sakuya also let out a delighted howl.



“No, you’re still D-Rank, you know.”

“Why!?”

The next day, Rudel received the conclusion from the instructors who had discussed the matter. Perhaps you could call it the natural result.

Rudel and Sakuya’s evaluation remained at D-Rank.

As Rudel approached the instructor in utter surprise, the active dragoon shied back as he explained.

“I mean, dude, boarding a shield of mana in hovering is downright cheating.”

“We halted in the air for a set period of time!”

While they definitely stopped, that wasn’t by Sakuya’s power, but by Rudel’s. In contrast, Sakuya hadn’t done a thing. She simply laid back on Rudel’s shield of light.

“And just because you can’t hit the target, you decide to blow the whole training ground away? Your imagination is terrifying!”

“But it was never stated in detail how we had to aim at the target!”

“No matter what you say, this is what’s been decided among the instructors... I’m begging you, just clear the tasks normally. We’re not asking for wit here.”

As the instructor with dropped shoulders handed the document to Rudel, he took his leave as if completely worn out.

“What am I supposed to say to Sakuya...”

While Rudel was depressed, he would have to inform Sakuya of the outcome. Recalling how Sakuya was looking forward to her result, Rudel felt a weight on his mind.

“I thought it was a perfect plan! How am I supposed to try clearing them next time...”

While Rudel used his head further, he couldn't think of any way to raise his evaluation by valid means.

The next day, after learning the results, Sakuya ended up running away.

Chapter 98: Running Away and the Search Party

“Sakuya ran away.”

His shoulders slumped, Rudel returned to the lodging house and muttered that truth to his peers.

Right after he woke up, he had made for the cave Sakuya lived, but it was already an empty husk. While Rudel was desperately searching for her, he found a message addressed to him, carved with claw at the cave’s entrance.

‘I’m going home. I’m sorry.’

They were extremely shoddy letters, but letters that brought back memories of a once-human Sakuya. The characteristics were similar, and that only made Rudel more depressed.

Saas didn’t know what he was supposed to say to a depressed Rudel. Everyone present was surprised at a situation where a dragon had run away.

“W-what am I supposed to say... cheer up.”

But Enora alone forsook him.

“Hmm, so your dragon ran away. In that case, you’re not a dragoon anymore. You don’t have any reason to stay here.”

On her cold words, those around stepped in to stop her.

“Quit it, Enora.”

But without seeming to pay it any mind, Rudel replied.

“Yeah, that’s why I’ve decided to search for her. I got permission from the instructors, so I’ll be operating separately for a while.”

“They gave permission? Well, with your status, I doubt they could refuse.”

Before being a dragoon, Rudel was the white knight. For a vital knight to the country of Courtois, having a dragon run away was nothing more than an embarrassment.

But more than his own evaluation, Rudel lamented the fact he hadn’t noticed

Sakuya was pressured enough to want to run away.

He was depressed because he had made Sakuya sad, and not the fact she had run away.

“Then I’ll be off.”

With teetering steps, Rudel started into air movement and left the spot.

“... I’ve already gotten used to it, but that guy’s definitely flying, isn’t he? He’s not jumping, right?”

As the light-natured knight muttered, everyone apart from Enora nodded.



Arriving at the dragons’ dwellings a few days later, Rudel was in tatters.

He had given chase in a hurry, making the journey practically empty-handed. All he had with him was a knife and a flask.

But without paying it much mind, he filled the inside of his flask with water magic. While the taste was terrible, as long as it quenched his throat, it wasn’t a problem.

It was a spell with terrible efficiency and an action he would only come out with in an emergency.

But having once spent a long while camping in the dragons’ dwellings, as long as he could make it to the dwellings, it wouldn’t be a problem.

‘Kid, what did you do? Sakuya’s holed herself up in the cave, and she won’t come out.’

After arriving in the dragons’ dwellings, he brought his feet straight to the cave Sakuya used as a stronghold. When he did, he found Marty’s dragon Mystith, who had brought her hunted prey to the entrance.

What seemed to be pray was clearly not the sort of fish she could catch in the lake.

Even larger than Mystith, it was a lifeform with an atrocious visage.

“I’m ashamed. Our evaluation was a bit low, and Sakuya grew mindful of it...”

Rudel tried to convey this hard-to-explain situation in a way Mystith would also understand.

‘... What’s that? They go incessantly evaluating every single thing and sticking a rank onto it? How idiotic.’

“My thoughts exactly.”

‘Sakuya, I brought you dinner, so let’s eat together. I caught the fish you like most.’

“... This is a fish?”

Looking at the fearsome lifeform, it definitely did have a dorsal fin and tail. But on top of being larger than a dragon, it made the foulest of expressions.

Rather than fish, calling it a sea monster hit the mark better.

‘Something wrong? It’s quite tasty. The bloody bastards live in the sea, and when they got a bit stuck up and tried attacking my kinsmen, I decided to eat them. And you know what, they turned out to be delicious.’

“That’s definitely not a fish, is it.”

‘As long as it’s tasty, kid.’

In order to eat the fish that was at a level even Rudel had to put in a retort, Sakuya came out of the cave. But as soon as she spotted Rudel, she bit onto the fish and took it with her back into the cave depths.

‘Hey! Come out here and eat! That’s bad manners!!’

“Sakuya! I’m begging you, please come back!!”

Rudel continued desperately calling out to Sakuya holed up in the back of the cave, but it didn’t have an effect.



‘Hmm~, hovering, and breath accuracy, eh.’

“Yes, Sakuya can’t help but be bad at them, and we can’t raise our rank,”

‘Are such things really necessary? I can’t understand it in the slightest. Well, once you grow big, you should be able to do it naturally, but in contrast to her

body, that girl's still a child.'

At the lake Mystith made her den, Rudel discussed with her how to deal with Sakuya's troubles.

'In the first place, she destroyed all the targets, and stopped in the air for a fixed period of time, right? Just what was so bad that she deserved to fail?'

"Who knows? I don't get it either. They told me they weren't looking for wit."

'That's what they call moving the goalpost.'

Conversing with a dragon that held a completely different sense of value, Rudel agreed and nodded. Around them, small dragon children were biting onto the prey Mystith had brought back.

It was a situation that delighted Rudel, and he wanted to go around petting the nearby dragons at once. But with Sakuya's matter, he held himself back.

Rudel couldn't seem to think up any resolution, so he sought verification with Mystith over the other matter that had been troubling him.

"Ah, there's another thing. Sakuya didn't have any energy at the dragon stables. At first, she was in high spirits, but she grew more and more depressed by the day... do you have any idea what the reason might be?"

'The dragon stables? How nostalgic. As long as she went about it normally, I don't think there would be any problem. Did something happen?'

"Let's see... when she's talking with me, the other dragons often cry out. In these sort of um, short growling bursts, I guess."

'... Kid, they're making light of her.'

"What?"

'I'm telling you they're making fun of her! Mocking her! Those damn brutesss!!'

"M-my word!"

After hearing the general circumstances from Rudel, Mystith concluded Sakuya was being bullied at the dragon stables. While dragons all shared a race, they would usually keep a level of distance from one another.

But as gray dragons didn't know life in the wild, they lived affected by one another more than necessary.

While their strength and intelligence didn't reach the level of a wild dragon, when it came to coordination and ease of use, a gray dragon was the best. But for the gray dragons who couldn't help but prioritize the group, if their foe showed any weakness, they would look down on them from an internalized pecking order.

"W-what should I do!?"

'... Who knows?'

"Eh... Don't you know any resolution!? Is there anything I can do for Sakuya!?"

'Even if you ask me that, well... when it came to me, I made the other dragons obey from the start, and I only know one way to go about it.'

"So there is a way!"

Rudel saw a glimmer of hope in Mystith's words.

But again, it was Mystith he was dealing with.

'It's simple. Duel the current boss of the dragon stable and beat them black and blue. If that's the way we're going, then it's training time! Now bring Sakuya out here.'

"Yes!!"

As Rudel raced off towards the cave, Mystith saw off his back.

'How nostalgic. It makes me recall Marty, back at the start when he was still naïve and innocent.'



Like that, in order to pull Sakuya out of the cave, Rudel made his way to it.

The deep and dark cave was the place the undead dragon originally slept. At this point, the cave's depths were no longer filled with the scent of death, and it was just a hole that was a little deep.

Within such depths, Sakuya was rolled in a ball, asleep.

She looked somewhat sorrowful. But around, the bones of the food Mystith brought in rolled around, and to Rudel, it looked strangely Sakuya-esque.

“Sakuya, let’s go outside.”

Perhaps not wanting to lend an ear to Rudel’s voice, Sakuya hid her head with both hands. Despite her large build, her movements were those of a pet who had done a bad thing and was afraid of what was to come.

“... I’m sorry. I never noticed you were hurting.”

‘... Not hurting’

“I heart from Mystith-sama. That you were being bullied by the gray dragons... I’m sorry.”

‘I’m not being bullied!!’

As Sakuya raised her voice into a yell, her violent roar shook the cave interior.

“Sakuya...”

On Rudel’s sorrowful voice, Sakuya stood and spread out her four large wings.

‘Sakuya isn’t being bullied! She’s a really strong dragon and Rudel’s partner! So... so Sakuya isn’t a no-good dragon!!’

After actually running away and holing herself up in a cave, perhaps Sakuya was a no-good dragon. But in front of Rudel, she tried to put on a bluff and appeal to him.

Not much time had passed since Sakuya’s birth, and unsuited to her giant build, her spirit was still young.

Thinking of how such a young girl had been forced to endure the jeers from her own kin for his sake, Rudel felt ashamed.

“... I’m a no-good partner.”

‘Why? Rudel didn’t do anything wrong.’

Approaching Sakuya, Rudel held out his hand.

Sakuya drew closer with her head and Rudel gently stroked her. Comfortably flapping her spread wings, Sakuya sat on the spot in delight.

“Sakuya, you and me together make a dragoon. When we’re evaluated low as a dragoon, that’s my responsibility as well.”

‘... The others say it. You fall behind your partner, you’re a useless dragon. So Sakuya isn’t needed... is it alright for Sakuya to be here?’

“Fall behind? That’s got nothing to do with anything. I’m your contractor, and you’re my dragon. If you weren’t there, I wouldn’t have become a dragoon in the first place. You can be here. No, please be my dragon!”

Saying it boldly, Rudel directed a gentle smile; Sakuya closed her eyes once as her response.

“Then let’s go outside. Mystith-sama is worried. And it seems she’s got some special training in store for you.”

‘Training?’

“Yeah, a training that will stop you from being bullied!!”

And like that, in order to train up Sakuya, Rudel holed himself up in the dragons’ dwelling again. It went without saying that by that point, he had completely forgotten about the unveiling that would take place in three months’ time.



Meanwhile, in the palace, Sakuya’s disappearance had become a huge problem.

The dragoon captain and vice-captain had been called out before the king and his authorities. While Rudel had gotten permission to search for his own dragon, he didn’t seem to be coming back.

In the palace, a simple runaway case had become a problem of national security.

“For the white knight’s dragon to run away, it’s so shameful there’s no way we can publicize it.”

“Good grief, what was management doing!?”

“More importantly, what are we going to do about the ceremony? If the white knight remains absent, we won’t be able to set an example.”

The news of the white and black knights had spread far and wide throughout Courtois.

In this ceremony called an unveiling, the level of attention to be poured on Rudel and Aleist was exceptionally high. In such a situation, there was no way they could announce that the white knight's dragon had run away, and he wasn't taking part.

"I have no excuses."

Oldart who laughed as he confronted the authorities was also a seasoned warrior. Something of this level was nothing to be flustered about.

But the other matters he had to handle made his head hurt.

(This is bad. The training ground is destroyed, and a dragon ran away... our budget's going to be cut, isn't it. Hah, can't our high and mighty archduke do something with his pocket money.)

Before the authorities, he troubled his head over his future expenses. In contrast, Alejandro had broken into a cold sweat. While Alejandro had a proficient dragon and ample achievement under his belt, this was the reason he was vice-captain.

He was terrible when it came to these things. Or rather, he didn't have the leisure.

Without the emotional leisure, Alejandro couldn't help but want to smack Rudel.

(To think he can't even manage his own dragon. At this rate, he won't make it in time for the unveiling! If that's all we'd get off with, it'd be fine, but Rudel has a low evaluation. At this rate, the dragoon brigade itself will be made light of!)

His flaw, his lack of leisure was what left him stuck at vice-captain.

Strength-wise, he didn't fall short of his fellow dragoon Oldart. But mindful of his personality, the former captain and vice-captain said farewell to his inauguration as captain.

"I will bring them back at once!"

While Oldart evasively dealt with the authorities, Alejandro gave a forceful

answer. He was also a single man, and it wasn't as if he had no interest in promotion.

What's more, even if he recognized Oldart's abilities, he was dealing with a man who had a gray dragon as his partner. He had conceit that he was the better of the two.

He wanted to get his hands on an opportunity to surpass Oldart no matter what.

"I see. But do you know where they are?"

"With the white knight who went searching of unknown whereabouts as well, it brings to doubt the quality of the dragoons."

"I truly have no excuse (Alejandro, read the mood a bit. He's not a brat anymore, if we keep quiet, I'm sure he'll return sooner or later)."

Oldart sent a pleading glance, but Alejandro didn't notice.

A few days later, a dragoon search party for Rudel and Sakuya was formed. As there was a limit to their numbers, even some of the new recruits were enlisted on rotation.

Chapter 99: The Search Party and the Head of the Platoon

Cattleya had been called to a meeting room in the palace under Lilim's orders.

At this point, Lilim had been put in charge of a company. That led to her becoming Cattleya's direct superior.

"What is it, senpai? I'm a bit busy."

Wearing the uniform of a major, Lilim was just a bit irritated at Cattleya's behavior. While the two of them had similarly caused a problem, Lilim had finished the newbie training requirement, so she was able to be promoted to command a company.

"... Cattleya, right now, I am your superior."

"Yeah, yeah. So what's up?"

"You really are an irritating one, you know that? It's an order from the top brass. Your platoon is to search out Rudel-sama... Recruit Rudel. But they want as many hands on it as possible this time, so you'll be using the new recruits as well."

After Lilim sent them a glance, the newcomers saluted to Cattleya. Receiving those salutes, reluctant as she was, Cattleya sent a salute back.

"This week, those three will be left with you."

The three in question included Saas, the knight of light personality: Luxheidt Aiguille... and Enora. Even standing before Cattleya, she was acting normal.

But inside, she thought her stomach would boil over.

Alejandro's sense of rivalry towards Oldart had burned so brightly he had been negligent in paying care to his daughter. In order to find Rudel, the one who gave permission to lend out the new recruits was Alejandro.

"Looks like one of you has a wind dragon. Having some fast legs is a huge help."

Looking through the documents she received from Lilim, Cattleya passed her eyes through Enora's papers and gave her honest admiration at the fact she had contracted a wind dragon.

Only those whose abilities and luck overlapped would be able to get a wild dragon to follow them.

At the same time, she noticed she was the vice-captain's daughter.

"... You'll be working with my subordinates from the platoon. We work in teams of two so Enora, come with me."

On Cattleya's orders, the newcomers saluted and gave their response. While Enora was making a serious expression on the surface, some dark emotions were beginning to take root.

Would I be able to kill Cattleya, she asked herself...

"Cattleya, I think you have the general idea, but if anything happens, then you have to pull back. You got that? This is an order."

Faced with a serious Lilim, Cattleya gave a salute, for argument's sake. But she was dealing with Rudel, an acquaintance. She questioned whether they really had to care about it that much.

"I really don't think I'm going to fail this one."

"That's why you're still naïve."

As Cattleya made light of Rudel, Lilim's anxieties only grew.



A wind dragon's speed was greater than what a gray dragon could keep up with.

Taking that into consideration, Cattleya had chosen to pair up with Enora. And even if she was supposed to increase the search radius, Cattleya already had an idea where they were.

If Sakuya wanted to run away, the only place she had to return was the dragons' dwellings. Any other dragon might escape overseas to make sure they wouldn't be found no matter how hard the country looked.

But from the point of view of Cattleya, who knew the situation, this time's mission was exceedingly easy.

The only problem was that the newbie she brought along hated Cattleya terribly, and her personality wasn't as it appeared.

"We're heading straight for the dragons' dwellings."

Riding the backs of their two dragons, the two dragoons matched dropped speed to discuss their destination point. But at Cattleya's arbitrary attitude, Enora was irritated within.

"Are they really at such an obvious place? (Dammit, don't order me around)."

"Yeah, well, that's the only place they could be."

Cattleya had her subordinates check out other places. In truth, she didn't really want knowledge on Rudel's peculiar behavior to spread.

While he was skilled, Rudel did seem to have a screw missing somewhere, and for better or worse, he worked at his own pace.

While he was like that, Rudel was a future archduke, and the white knight, an existence that stood out in Courtois. From those who knew him, this was quite the predicament.

Reading 'How to Pet a Dragon' dearly, he was a problem child who worshiped Marty Wolfgang. That was Cattleya's evaluation of Rudel.

While this and that happened before, at this point, she would honestly evaluate and commend his effort.

But she couldn't quite let that exorbitant personality spread through the world. She teamed up with Enora because if she was the daughter of a dragoon house, Cattleya expected her to understand such delicate problems.

She already knew about the destruction of the training ground from the reports, and from a position of responsibility, it was a problem that brought pain to Cattleya's head.

So with Cattleya's red dragon following behind, Enora urged her wind dragon towards the dragons' dwellings.

(Someday, right... I'll definitely surpass her. No matter what I have to do, no matter what methods I have to use!)

Perhaps it is here that we must explain the character called Enora. She had no major relation to the story. At best, she was a character that appeared as one of Courtois' dragoons.

While she was talented, that was the end of it.

Compared to Cattleya who was practically loved by the world, her situation was completely different.



Around when the search party was formed, Sakuya began her training alongside Mystith.

As it was a dragon's training, she would be operating separate from Rudel for a period of time. And left alone, Rudel was fooling around with the young dragons of Mystith's turf.

"Hey! That's my lunch!!"

As a small dragon snatched up a fish he had caught in the lake, Rudel gave chase with a smile. Even if they were children, their size was no different from a grown human being.

Perhaps due to the influence of the lake they lived in, they were all showing the characteristics of a water dragon on their heads.

While the dragons fled into the lake, with his inhuman abilities, Rudel easily chased and captured the fleeing dragons.

"Now you have to return it... you already ate it?"

From the mouth of the dragon he caught, he could see the tail of a fish. At the success of his mischief, the little dragon seemed delighted.

Through his survival lifestyle in the dragons' dwellings, Rudel had fastened his knife to the end of a stick. Since he lived close to the lake, his clothes would often get wet, so at this point, he wore a waist wrap made of sturdy leaves.

Looking practically like a wild man, he was playing around with little dragons.

“This really is the life.”

Holding one dragon under his arm as he crawled out of the lake, Rudel exclaimed it with a smile. But where he climbed up, leading a red and wind dragon, Cattleya and Enora were waiting for them.

“Don’t ‘This really is the life’ me! You’ve become a dragoon, so have some self-awareness!”

“Cattleya-sa... lieutenant.”

He was about to add a –sama to Cattleya’s name, but recalling the fact that he was also a dragoon now, he swallowed his words.

“What are you doing in a place like this?”

Before his fed-up fellow newbie Enora, Rudel gently placed the shy dragon he carried on the ground. All the small dragons fled into the lake and disappeared.

“Training.”

“Training? More importantly, did you find Sakuya yet? We’ve got to return soon.”

Showing little interest in Rudel’s answer, Cattleya looked around to find Sakuya. She was sure she’d be somewhere by Rudel’s side.

“That’s impossible. She’s currently out training in the north sea.”

“The sea... when will she be back?”

“No idea.”

“No idea!? What do you mean ‘no idea’!? We’re in a hurry here! You know there’s barely any time left for her to learn to fly in formation for the unveiling, don’t you!?”

While Cattleya drew close, Rudel didn’t step down.

“No, there’s something more important than flying in formation. Right now, Sakuya is doing her best to learn it. I’m going to believe in her, and wait here.”

“And what’s that?”

“Defeating the boss of the dragon stables.”

“What’s with that!? Your dragon ran away for something like that!?”

As Rudel spoke on with a serious expression, Cattleya had gotten her hopes up a bit, but now she was only able to yell. She had to make a report, so if possible, she wanted a more decent reason.

“If it’s Sakuya, she’ll be able to do it! More importantly, do you happen to know who the boss of the dragon stables might be?”

‘... That would be me.’

Cattleya’s dragon butted into the conversation. But here it was revealed that the dragon they had to beat was Cattleya’s very one red dragon.

“Oh no! ... Sakuya, your opponent is a powerful one. Do your best!”

Rudel prayed for Sakuya’s safety in her fight with Cattleya’s dragon. But the one in question hadn’t swallowed down the circumstances.

‘What do you mean, ‘do your best’!? If I get smacked by that giant, I won’t come out in one piece!! In the first place, why did it come to defeating the boss? I don’t get it at all.’

“The truth is...”

Rudel put together what had happened to that point and conveyed it to everyone. There were things those apart from Enora didn’t know, and the fact Sakuya was being bullied carried with it some sympathy.

“I feel a bit sorry for her. But running away was going too far.”

‘I see, so that kid was being bullied... but this has nothing to do with me, right? I haven’t been to the dragon stables in ages.’

“No, beating the boss is our objective.”

As Rudel calmly informed him he was relevant, showing his will to accomplish his goal, the red dragon and Cattleya made a ruckus.

‘Don’t screw with me! I really know nothing!!’

“To think my dragon who gets beat up every time was actually...”

After being removed from newbie rearing, Cattleya had been given a mission. She had no idea about the affairs of the dragon stables. As a major, Lilim’s

dragon was in a separate stable.

It was an unlucky occurrence.

Enora was unable to hear the voice of Cattleya's dragon. In such a state, she was unable to enter the conversation. She asked her own dragon to interpret and could do no more than listen.

But her face was turning red.

Her eyes couldn't help but drift towards Rudel.

Brought up harsher than Cattleya by her parents-especially her father-Enora kept a distance from men at the academy. While she did wear stylish clothing, that was also a form of recoil against her upbringing.

But she hadn't the leisure to date men. With a dragoon as her father, no knight would unskillfully approach her.

She had no resistance to the male gender.

Her accustomed façade was her own way of rebelling against her father. While Enora's dragon was abridging and conveying Rudel's conversation, it noticed the strange behavior of its contractor.

'What's wrong?'

"... I-it's nothing."

To make sure no one perceived her reddened face, Enora directed her mind towards other things. As her head changed to their course of action henceforth, she sought confirmation with Rudel, who was still arguing.

"Sorry to interrupt. But more importantly, is it not best that we first make a report? The higher-ups are still angry over his present unaccounted for status."

While she acted as if she was calmly thinking over future plans, Enora's gaze was directed at Rudel. As the conversation was turned towards work, Cattleya also changed her train of thought.

"Right... then I'll go report. You stay and watch over him."

Cattleya pointed at Rudel, the seed of worry, as she ordered Enora to stay alone with him. While she was a woman, she was first a knight, and Enora

agreed to abide the request.

There was nothing to say about man and woman. More than anything, leaving Rudel alone would be a problem.

Even now, perhaps thinking the conversation was over, he had started into preparing lunch.

“That aside, why won’t you come back? If Sakuya is training, then isn’t it fine if you return? If need be, I can take you back now.”

When Cattleya asked Rudel as if only noticing it now, Rudel made a perplexed face.

“Eh? If Sakuya is training, then I have to train too. Today, I played with the dragon children!”

As Rudel boldly confessed to playing, Cattleya silently lowered a fist on his head.

“... I’ll hear out your excuse.”

“Isn’t that something you’re supposed to say before you hit me? Well, Mystith-sama left the care of the children to me, and while she was at it, she taught me Marty-sama’s training method. Both me and Sakuya will have powered up by the time we return home. Ow!”

As Cattleya silently put in a kick, her red dragon cheered her on.

‘Kick him! Kick him more! I only ever get treated like this whenever Rudel’s involved! It’s definitely that guy’s fault!’

Cattleya continued kicking him for a while, but once she grew tired, she gave up.

“You really should grow some self-awareness!”

“Why!? This is to become the strongest dragoon!”

“Shut it! The first step is to become a decent human being!”

Cattleya’s statement, which would definitely set the captain laughing if he was there, echoed through the forest. Looking over that scene, Enora’s eyes grew sharp.

Chapter 100: The Head of the Platoon and Formation Flying

Left to watch over Rudel, Enora would be alone with him until Cattleya returned from giving her report.

Even when it was a man and woman together, and they were by a lake in a forest, a place with all the conditions together, there was absolutely no sensuality to it at all. No, since Rudel was wearing nothing but a wrap around his waist, perhaps he was exuding a hint of sexuality.

But he was grappling with a few child dragons and playing around.

Peeking at that scene from a little away, Enora was using a tree stump in place of a chair. There were a number of bags on her dragon's back, and one of them contained ample emergency rations.

Her only worry was that Rudel was a man. But if she was told the man before her eyes would assault her, she had no choice but to doubt.

Of all else, he was living quite a free lifestyle, either playing with dragons or preparing meals. Within all that, he only ever called out to Enora twice.

“Procure some food supplies.”

“I’m going to sleep.”

That was it. While Enora had been wary at the start, after the first night went by, she understood that was a futile effort on her part. She had confidence in her looked and body, leaving her in a bit of disbelief.

(Could it be I’m not as charming as I thought I was?)

While she seriously began mulling over how to associate with men, Rudel was making a truly nice smile as he played with the dragons.

Wanting to make him think of exactly what he had perpetuated, Enora called over to Rudel.

“Hey you, is it really alright for you to play around like that? You’re already a dragoon with responsibility, right? You don’t have the time to play around

here.”

While her phrasing was a bit thorny, it was the truth.

But Rudel’s standards were always a bit off. As expected of an oddball who revered Marty, his thoughts could be said to be closest to Marty’s.

That wasn’t all. Rudel and Sakuya had a promise to keep. In order to fulfill their promises to the black fog, Rudel’s priorities were different from the other dragoons.

“No problem. Right now, Sakuya is training. If my dragon isn’t here, I’m no more than a single knight. So I’ve decided to wait here.”

“And I’m telling you, in that case, you could just wait obediently at the lodging house. You’re causing trouble to all of us.”

“... When your partner is doing their best, would you be able to sit still and rest?”

When you’re playing around, what do you think you’re saying? Thought Enora as she let out a sigh.

“We’re knights. We have an obligation to follow our orders.”

“You do have a point. But before being a knight, I am a dragoon. If my partner Sakuya is working hard, I’ve decided to wait for her.”

(It’s the same no matter where you wait.)

Fed-up, Enora gave up on persuading Rudel and looked up at the sky. The tree branches and leaves got in the way, and she couldn’t quite see it, but the light streaming in was beautiful.

Looking back on herself, she saw she rarely ever had the opportunity to spend her time in such leisure.

She had trained to become a dragoon, and at the academy, she had polished herself. Even after becoming a knight, she had worked desperately to build up her ability.

Up until she obtained a dragon, she really was busy. And even after that, what followed were busy days of training and investigating Rudel... this was truly

comfortable.

Feeling a sudden sense of drowsiness, she accepted it and let it come upon her.



A young Enora stood stock still before her. In the darkness, her father's voice flew at her from all directions.

"How many times do I have to say it!? If you can't do it, then you're not sleeping tonight!"

"As if you could become a dragoon if you can't even do that!"

'... It's not like I wanted to become one.'

'I'm telling you, I don't know this Cattleya person. Don't compare us!'

"Cattleya caused a problem. Good grief... even so, she should be glad she got off, just with being sent off to the border."

"Cattleya isn't returning from the border. With this, we can finally have some relief."

'... As I was saying, who the hell is Cattleya!?'

"You're going to the dragon dwellings again? How old do you plan to become before you can contract a dragon!?"

"Hah, when I thought you'd finally become a dragoon, Cattleya's a lieutenant."

'What is it? What isn't to your liking!? If you like Cattleya more than me, then you could've just said it from the start! I worked hard! I did my best, and yet...'

A younger form of herself began to crouch and weep before her eyes. Enora looked over the scene, gritting her teeth.

Her own form she didn't want to see brought in her irritation.

When she grabbed her child self's arm to pull her to her feet, that child's face was no longer crying. It simply returned an intense glare.

'... When you're just afraid. You're scared your father will choose Cattleya, right? I mean, no one ever looks at you. Even when you try looking like that, you don't even have the confidence to back it... weakling. You'll never triumph over

Cattleya.'

"W-what do you know!!"

Flying into a rage, Enora opened her eyes.



Hearing Enora's pained voice, Rudel headed over to find she was having a nightmare.

Enora's wind dragon had left the area to find food. The child dragons were following behind Rudel.

Peering into Enora's face, she looked to be in pain.

"She's having a nightmare. I better wake her."

Just as he placed an arm on Enora's shoulder, she opened her eyes. Her gaze moving left and right to probe out the surrounding situation, her breath was exceedingly rough.

Her usual form of leisure was nowhere to be found.

Seeing Enora was awake, Rudel retracted the hand he had extended to her shoulder. With rough breath, Enora had her torso leaned up against a tree.

She stood from the spot to look at Rudel. Out of breath, she confirmed Rudel was there.

"Hah, hah you... you used to be engaged to Cattleya, right?"

"Yeah, I definitely was engaged to her. What about it?"

There, perhaps her leisure had come back as Enora unfastened a button at her bosom. Getting her breath in order, she showed off her body even more charming than usual.

"Hey, do you want to go out with me?"

Cattleya had conducted problematic behavior exceedingly ill in nature towards Rudel. But there were rumors going back and forth between the female dragoons.

Rumors that Cattleya had a thing for Rudel. While she didn't know where that

rumor had come from, to Enora, snatching up what Cattleya wanted was a good feeling indeed.

The fact she was suddenly seducing Rudel was surely because she had just gotten up, and her head wasn't working normally.

But Rudel's response was exceedingly light.

"That's not happening."

"... Eh?"

A foolish voice came from Enora, who was trying to emphasize her chest. After confirming that Enora was okay, he took along the dragon children and headed back towards the lake.

In her panic, Enora yelled at his back to hear out his reasons.

"Why's that!? You're not interested in me? Or are you not interested in women!?"

Rudel turned, and matching his movement, the child dragons turned as well. Making a bit of a reluctant face, Rudel answered.

"You sure are a rude one. I like women, and I do lust after them. But I don't have that sort of freedom."

"That's a lie! When you won't even fulfill your obligation as a knight, why are you only diligent when it comes to that!?"

"Hah, you are definitely appealing. But when you don't even particularly like me, going out is just strange. If you're after money or status, you should give up on the Arses House."

As Rudel turned his back uninterestedly, Enora looked on dumbfounded. After a while, she glared at Rudel with intense frustration.

Her clenched fist was shaking.

(You mean even this guy... even this sort of guy is making fun of me.)



Around that time, Cattleya was reporting to the vice-captain.

“Why didn’t you bring him back!?”

To the vice-captain who slammed the desk in a display of anger, she gave a response that seemed earnest on the surface.

“Sir, when he did not have his dragon, I thought it pointless to have him return. Recruit Rudel’s and his dragon have set the dragons’ dwelling as their point of reunion. It was in my best interest to refrain from moving him and causing a possible panic...”

“No excuses! In that case, you just had to take Rudel along to search for his dragon. Return at once and find them!”

The reason Alejandro was so panicked lay in the grand gesture he had shown the authorities of taking responsibility for the search. Through his hostility towards Oldart, he had dug his own grave.

“But with nothing more to go by than ‘the north sea’, such a search would surely prove difficult for us alone.

“I’ll send around the necessary personnel. Wait... the north sea, you say?”

“Yes. I believe that will be too harsh on the new recruits. All the knights in possession of water dragons are currently away on missions.”

In the north sea existed the sorts of monsters that would prey on dragons. With their slender, snake-like bodies, those one-horned monsters boasted visages of extreme ferocity.

Called the Pent Caesars, they were the monsters that ruled the north sea.

If dragged into the water, even a dragon could become a meal. The only ones who could contest them one-on-one were the water dragons who could display their power within the water.

Even so, outrunning them was often the most they could hope for.

It was an exceedingly dangerous land.

“So Bennet and Keith are on missions... we can’t remove them.”

The appearance of monsters in the coastal waters of a trade city had the two knights who possessed water dragons off on a mission.

Taking the underwater battles into account, it wasn't possible to remove them from the mission. Alejandro couldn't understand why Sakuya had brought her feet all the way to the north sea.

"How could this be."

As Alejandro thought, Cattleya made a proposal she thought was safe.

"We're not currently in any danger. Why don't we dispatch someone to keep watch on him and establish periodic contact? As long as we can hold him in place, it shouldn't be a problem."

"We cannot call Rudel back?"

"He doesn't seem to have any intention of moving."

Hearing Cattleya's answer, Alejandro slammed his fist against the desk. It was because the former captain and vice-captain knew this side of him that they had chosen Oldart as captain.

But when it came to comprehensive ability, it was said Alejandro was the higher of the two.

"... Let the new recruits watch over him on rotation. No, wait, Cattleya, you take some responsibility and keep watch."

"Yes sir (Tsk, he wants to push it onto me)."

It was decided then and there that Cattleya would take responsibility to keep watch over Rudel. But skillful with her words, Cattleya managed to push responsibility onto her superior Lilim.



In the north sea, Mystith was bestowing unto Sakuya her sure-fire plan to defeat the boss of the dragon stables.

The north sea was exceedingly cold, abundant in all forms of sea life, and famous for their taste. But it was also famous for the appearance of Pent Caesars. Those ferocious monsters who would mercilessly scarf down any enemy that would dare tread on their turf.

'Now there! One, two, finish!!'

Matching Mystith's voice, Sakuya smacked her left fist into the pent caesar that leapt out of the water, and next she smacked in her right fist.

Finally, she took a turn, hammering in a powerful blow with her tail.

After ingraining the art of hovering into herself, she was now training on those sandbags called pent caesars to overcome the fear of fighting the boss.

'Put more force into it!! And you have to aim for the vitals! Eyes up, the next one is coming.'

'These guys look scarryyyy!!'

Sakuya complained, but Mystith trained her harshly.

'If these guys can surprise you, you'll never be able to take on the boss of the stables. No this time get those fists and tail in faster, more precisely! Like this!!'

A pent caesar leapt at Mystith from the water. But without any excess movement, Mystith plunged in her fists, finally using her tail to deliver the final blow.

She nonchalantly showed a fine-tuned art of putting in two attacks with her tail.

As she blew it away, she went the pent caesar onto land. Over there were the piles of pent caesars that had been taken down by the two dragons.

'Your arms are long and your fists are large. Even your tail is hard, so as long as you grasp the trick, it's simple. Once you use this to sink the boss, you'll become the new boss!'

'Boss sounds like a pain. I want to take it easy with Rudel.'

'Don't be so soft!!'

'And even if I can do hoovarin (?) my breath doesn't hit, and I can't fly in formation... they're going to make fun of Rudel.'

The pent caesar that jumped out at a depressed Sakuya was split in two by a shot of Mystith's compressed water laser.

After it fell, she let out a sigh and made a promise to Sakuya.

'I understand. I'll tag along in that 'formation flying' of yours, so for now, just

concentrate on this. Your breaths will start hitting their mark eventually.'

'Really?'

'Leave it to me! I'll choose a few from my turf... I guess they won't stand out much? In that case, I'll bring some good-looking ones from the other turfs with me.'

In the other turfs, there were plenty of dragons who wouldn't even try to move if Mystith called out. While they obeyed her only once, when the undead dragon's soul was released, apart from that, they didn't get involved.

'If you bring them, will I be able to fly in formation?'

Sakuya didn't really understand the whole flight formation thing. But it was something she heard from Rudel, so she only recognized it as something she could ask him about later.

What's more, she was convinced Mystith knew what it was.

'Leave it to me! I'll give you a splendid flight formation!'

(TL: The word 編隊飛行 (Hentaihikou) literally means formation flying, but here, Mystith is using 変態飛行 (Hentaihikou) bizarre/pervert flying, clearly demonstrating she does not know what she is talking about.)

Chapter 101: Formation Flying and Healing Magic

Mystith and Sakuya had temporarily returned from the north sea, and the large load of pent caesars that carried back left Luxheidt, who had subbed in for surveillance duty, in mute amazement.

“You brought back quite a bit.”

‘Amazing, right!? They’re for you.’

Sakuya put her hands to her hips in pride as she bent her back backwards. A majority of the pent caesars had been beaten in the face.

The dragon children started biting onto the giant sea creatures.

Apart from them, from the lake, slightly larger dragons on the verge of adulthood began gathering as well.

‘Well, I hunted a majority of them. Sakuya, you see, she finally managed to do hovering, but she’s not putting her body weight into her fists and tail.’

As Mystith made a punching motion, Rudel nodded. Her straits were of especially good form.

“I see Sakuya’s working hard.”

‘As long as my feet touch the ground, I’m perfect! One, two, finish! Is what you do, and the boss is down for the count!!’

As Sakuya swung her fists around, the wind pressure shook the trees. Seeing she had regained her energy, Rudel smiled as well.

Unlike Rudel, Luxheidt’s complexion was only going paler.

Having heard out the reason for Sakuya’s running away, he knew his own dragon wasn’t unrelated. Seeing Sakuya’s punching motions, he worried for his partner.

“That’s the spirit! ... But you see, Sakuya. I have some bad news. The dragon stable’s boss is Lieutenant Cattleya’s red dragon.”

‘O-oh no! I thought he was a good dragon...’

While Sakuya hung her head, Mystith to her side was shaking. After a moment of silence, she let out a roar to the heavens. Her roar practically contained enough force to part the clouds.

‘That trash-tier dragooooonnn!! I’ll send him straight to hell!!’

Having witnessed that scene, Luxheidt decided to resign from his surveillance duty. Meanwhile, Luxheidt’s partner gray dragon informed its comrades at the dragon stable of this truth.

The stables were shrouded in the atmosphere of a wake.



“Formation flying? I’ve never seen it either.”

‘I see, I thought if anyone, you’d be the one to know.’

As Luxheidt’s health took a turn and he went to bed, Mystith sought confirmation with Rudel about flying in formation. It was something that didn’t exist in Marty’s era, and something Mystith hadn’t any interest in, so she didn’t know.

But with the matter with Sakuya, she couldn’t ask any of the dragons currently contracted to active dragoons.

So Mystith seriously began thinking over what to do in the request she had taken up from Sakuya.

“Ah, but I do know what they’re going to do. It seems they’re going to line up and fly over the airspace of the capital.”

‘That sounds easy enough.’

“No, apparently they need to do some aerial maneuvers as well. It’s something of an established practice that happens every year, and it’s for the new and old dragoons to display their mettle. Since it takes place every year, they try one-upping each other each year, so the level of difficulty’s risen to a problematic level.”

While Rudel explained, based on Sakuya’s condition, he had the notion of not taking part in his field of vision. If it was possible, he wanted to participate, but he wasn’t particularly fixated on it.

To Rudel, Sakuya was more important.

‘Aerial maneuver? Over a city? As that child is now, there will be some substantial collateral damage.’

Right, for the current Sakuya, even turning around in midair was dangerous. Just by falling onto the city, the total damage would be considerable.

“That’s right. I intend to withdraw.”

‘You idiot! You enormous idiot!! You might be alright with that, but that child will mind. Hah~, how troublesome.’

Looking at the rare sight of a dragon in thought, Rudel mulled over it seriously as well.

“Apparently, it’s fine as long as you have impact, so could we give up on the aerial maneuvers and focus on something else? Dressing Sakuya up nicely or something?”

‘I see, I’m not sure what to think about dressing her, but it’s fine as long as there’s impact, huh. That makes matters simple. We just have to put that child at the center and have the others do acrobatics around her.’

“Certainly. But Sakuya’s large, so it will be a hard task for the new recruits.”

The flight formations were done in groups split between newbies and veterans. From the fact there were nine new recruits that term, the formation would consist of nine steeds.

Rudel tried imagining the giant Sakuya with the other newbies’ gray dragons and Enora’s wind dragon flying around her.

But that lacked the impact.

It would appear too crude for the people who came to watch the dragons flying in formation each year.

‘Leave it to me. I’ll lead along some of the good-looking ones... if that’s what it’s come to, it’ll take a bit of time.’

Mystith began preparing for her own flight formation.



“So I’m on surveillance again.”

“Are you dissatisfied?”

“No... I, Enora Campbell, take on the duty of watching over Rudel.”

In the vice-captain office, Enora saluted her father Alejandro. But Alejandro was on the clock, and he didn’t treat her as a father would his daughter.

While that was the correct thing to do, for Enora, her father was always a dragoon. Even when he returned home, she barely saw any difference.

“Cattleya shows not the slightest motivation in this case. I’m placing my hopes on you.”

While Alejandro didn’t notice it himself, he was constantly comparing Cattleya and Enora. Enora was definitely his daughter, and he did love her, but that was precisely why he couldn’t accept that she fell short of Cattleya.

And such words would always leave deep wounds on the girl.

The man himself had only spoken the truth. Cattleya was also involved in the matter at hand, and he hadn’t the mind to compare her and his daughter.

(So my father plans to push the job Cattleya’s unmotivated to do onto me.)

Alejandro wanted her to hurry and become a first-rate dragoon, he was sure he was being harsh on her for that sake. But his daughter Enora knew not such intent.

(Cattleya, Cattleya, Cattleya... if you like her so much, then just adopt her already!)

Leaving the office, Enora passed by the captain, Oldart, give a salute before leaving with swift feet to prepare for her mission.

Having been passed by, Oldart breathed out a sigh. He had noticed Enora’s expression as if she was cornered, and sensed things weren’t going well between Alejandro and his daughter.

The fact he knew the man was mindful of his daughter through his work led him to instantly understand Alejandro’s lack of emotional leisure was the cause.

“What sort of face is that? That Alejandro, there really is no helping him.”

A worn look on his face, Oldart dropped by the vice-captain office, entering the room without so much as a knock. There was a bundle of documents gripped in his hand and they were documents pertaining to the training ground Rudel had destroyed.

“Yo! I went and finished all the miscellaneous stuff.”

These sort of matters were what Alejandro was supposed to do. Command of Rudel and Sakuya’s search should have been taken by Oldart. In truth, a majority of the brigade members knew it would go better like that.

“You could at least knock. More importantly, about Rudel. When he gets back, we should have some severe punishment in store.”

“Against an archduke? You’re an idiot, aren’t you.”

Alejandro’s serious intent to punish Rudel severely was blown away with a smile. In essence, the top brass of Courtois wasn’t seeking that much from them.

More than that, it was more problematic that the vice-captain was seeking heavy punishment in the first place.

He was white knight, a future archduke, and there was even a possibility he could become the next king. Within all that, the authorities couldn’t possibly accept Alejandro’s opinion.

“What’s wrong with seeking harsh punishment on a dragoon and a knight of this country!? If we treat him specially, we won’t be able to set an example for the others!!”

“Don’t get so angry. And just look here, Rudel and his dearest are a bit special. You need to learn to adapt and improve.”

Alejandro’s opinion was sound. At present, Rudel was but a single knight, and he had an obligation to obey orders from the top.

But Rudel’s position was special, and what was asked of him was different.

“Adapt and improve? I don’t want to hear that from the man who ends up behind in everything.”

“Yeah, yeah, so... anyways. Did you find Rudel-kun?”

“... He’s living a survival lifestyle in the dragons’ dwellings. And to think he’s enjoying it, how easygoing can he be.”

Elsewhere from the words Alejandro spat out, Oldart gave a grin.

(Now that’s an interesting one. If it were me, I’d decline having to camp out in that dangerous land. Well, it looks like it’s going to be a pain, even after he gets back.)

Oldart looked at Alejandro, letting out a sigh at the stiff expression of his vice-captain.

(Hah, guess I’ll have to follow through. Though Alejandro’s going to be angry.)



A few days later, having switched out with Luxheidt on Rudel’s surveillance duty, Enora was looking at Rudel.

Unlike last time, he had now received a new task from Mystith, and he was casting recovery magic on the child dragons.

As a knight, he was only required to know recovery magic to the extent of first-aid.

Seeing him start working on it so late in the game, Enora looked at Rudel with mocking eyes. Lowering her hips onto the tree stump that had become her favorite, she called out to Rudel, who continued his treatment a little ways away.

“Even if you do that much treatment, I don’t think it’ll make you a better dragoon.”

But without even turning his face, Rudel responded.

“If I’m told it’s something necessary for a dragon, then it’s something necessary for me. I have to polish this healing magic more.”

“Hah, isn’t there something more important for you to do? Why don’t you master your other magics? It’s your specialty, right? Graduating the academy with top grades, winning the individuals’ tournament, it all sounds too good to be true.”

“... I’m not good at magic at all. That’s why I desperately worked on it. I only have a bit of talent in swordplay and martial arts. If I went about it normally, I’d never beat genius. That’s why I polished it. And even now, I’m training every day.”

When Rudel said he couldn’t win against genius, Enora shot back.

“What’s with that!? You had talent, didn’t you!? That’s why your grades were at the top and you dominated the tournament, right? You say that’s not talent? Don’t make me laugh!”

When it came to enough effort to make one taste blood, Enora had done it as well. While being a girl, she had trained with her spear day after day until her hands turned rough and callous.

In studies and magic, under her father’s words, she had desperately studied.

Yet even she couldn’t reach the top of the academy. Her grades were in the upper ranks, but she was constantly compared to Cattleya, who went and graduated first.

She was different from Rudel, who delightedly trained every day because he wanted to become a dragoon.

Once Enora’s voice converted to a scream, the young dragon by Rudel’s side shot a ball of water. The orb racing towards Enora was small, but even so, it was something fired by a dragon, young as it was.

On that sudden occurrence, Enora was late to react. Hit by that orb, she ended up blasted back.

At that moment, she failed in her landing and twisted her leg.

The wind dragon nearby Enora opened its mouth wide, letting out a roar and taking up an intimidating stance towards the child dragon.

All the young dragons present took off at once, diving deep into the depths of the lake. Rudel was the only one left on the spot.

“You rascals, if you’re going to run, then you shouldn’t do mischief in the first place... those precious little things.”

While the wind dragon intimidated Rudel, he didn’t seem bothered by it.

More than that, he knew that if it was really angry, the wind dragon would have killed him.

Heading over to Enora, he decided to look at her injury.



Removing her soaked clothes, Enora draped a robe over her undergarments.

She prepared an open fire to dry off her clothes. While she had a change of clothing prepared, she planned to change into it after she had Rudel look at her sprained leg.

Feeling a bit guilty, Rudel volunteered to treat her. More than anything, the swelling was a bit severe. As Enora was bad at healing magic, she chose to leave it to Rudel.

“There’s a slight crack in the bone. Well, at this level, it’ll work itself out.”

“... I’m sorry about before. I got too emotional.”

“Sure enough, you get emotional quite easily.”

Seeing Rudel smile as he affirmed it, Enora’s face went stiff. If she said something like that, she had thought a majority of men would deny it.

With the conversation going differently to how she expected, Enora ended up closing her mouth from embarrassment.

“Then I’ll start... it’s been a while since I tested on a human, but even if it hurts, do your best not to cry.”

“I won’t cry!”

But in the next moment, Enora’s tears flowed.

“Kuh, any more is... no! I’m already...”

Slumped on the ground, her leg stuck out towards Rudel, Enora’s robe had lightly peeled off. Every time she wrenched her body, her robe would reveal more.

Her face was red, her breath rough. And her eyes were unfocused. At first, she was sitting, showing only her leg, but now she lay with her hands frantically grasping the weeds that grew on the ground.

“Does it hurt? It’s going to be over soon.”

Rudel grasped Enora’s ankle with his left hand to fix it in place, letting off a warm light of magic from his right. It was a healing magic, and a special healing magic he had learned from Mystith.

Healing was always accompanied by pain, and it was a magic specialized to relieve that pain as much as possible.

“Wrong! That’s not ieeeeek!”

As she gripped the weeds on the ground, she put in too much power and plucked them away. Her back arching, Enora bit onto the edge of her robe to prevent herself from letting out any more of her voice.

She couldn’t raise any more embarrassing sounds.

Her mouth pulling away the bottom of her robe, Enora exposed her bare legs to Rudel. But now wasn’t the time to care about that.

She felt her consciousness would fly away a number of times, and within that, Rudel put a stop to his magic.

“Are you alright?”

“Hah, hah, I-I’m fine... eh?”

It was only there that she recognized her own situation. She had writhed around so much her robe had almost completely come off. Her lower half was completely exposed to Rudel.

Growing embarrassed, she tried to restore her robe only for Rudel to restart his treatment.

“I see, then I’ll go on. There’s only a little more to go.”

“W-wait! Wait I saaaayy!!”

Her agony continuing a little while longer, once the treatment was over, she was left laid over the ground, her robe fully open and exposing her body to Rudel.

From the sheer intensity of her treatment, there was saliva dripping from Enora’s lips. At times, some meaningless words would come from her mouth.

“Yeah~, it looks like I’ve got a long way to go. But is a sprain really supposed to be that painful? ... I-it couldn’t be! You mean my healing magic was extremely painful!?”

When Rudel was aiming for a healing magic that lessened the pain, this was a serious problem.

“When I was casting magic so the dragons wouldn’t feel any pain, if it brings such torment to the all-important human patients, I won’t be able to use it! Damn, I’ll have to relearn it from the ground up.”

A depressed Rudel, and Enora, who lay powerlessly.

Rudel was in a waist wrap, and Enora in her undergarments. If anyone saw, it was a scene open to all manner of misinterpretation.

Chapter 102: The Effects of Healing Magic and the Dogfight

After Rudel healed her sprain with healing magic, Enora could no longer look into his face.

It went without saying; Rudel had seen such a deplorable side of her. But she still had time left on her surveillance duty, and she couldn't quite abandon her mission to run away.

Her face turning red every time she observed Rudel's form, Enora was definitely a failure at her job.

Cattleya, who met up with them along the way, looked at Enora with wonder.

"What's up with you?"

"N-no... it's nothing."

"No, something clearly went down. Why is your face so red?"

"And I'm telling you that it's nothing!"

Ignoring their unproductive quarrel, Rudel was riding a shield of light he had produced over the lake. That shield that used magic to glide along the water's surface was practically a board.

Atop the water, Rudel was moving about freely.

From the lake, orbs of water flew from the mouths of child dragons. As he avoided them, Rudel seemed to be enjoying himself.

"That one was close!"

Growing irritated, the dragon children desperately tried to hit Rudel with their orbs. At times, they would leap out of the water to take him from surprise, occasionally targeting him from the air as well.

But they were unable to capture Rudel.

It was almost as if he had eyes on the back of his head, and he managed to dodge everything coming at him. But that was only something he was capable

of because he was up against those immature dragons.

Watching over them carefully for days, he had seen through the habits and tendencies of the dragons.

It would be questionable to say Mystith was thinking that deeply when she had him take care of the young children, but Rudel had grown some.

He had gained a deeper understanding of dragons. The practical experience he could never get in a book had Rudel take another step forward as a dragoon.

Seeing that scene, Cattleya created a fireball in her hand and threw it at Rudel. At that attack she had fired with the premise of Rudel dodging it, Enora showed a face of surprise.

Because it was on a level where he wouldn't get off with a scratch of two if it hit.

"What are you doing, brat!!"

When the ball of fire hit the surface, it raised a small pillar of water. Rudel was swallowed up by its wave, tossed from his shield into the lake.

"L-lieutenant Cattleya..."

"You look healthy, Rudel. More importantly, could you explain this situation?"

'Oy, don't bully that one too much. I'll be killed.'

Seeing her own fearful red dragon, Cattleya clicked her tongue. She had somehow managed to push responsibility onto Lilim, but her own dragon cowering from Mystith was simply too pitiful.

"Yes ma'am. I was bored, so I thought up a new way to use my shield. While hovering was apparently a failure, I'm sure there must be another effective way to use it."

As Rudel popped his head out of the water to answer, Cattleya felt her head hurt.

"... And where is your dragon? We're just about running out of time here."

"She's returned a few times, and it seems there's just a little more to go."

"She came back? Why didn't you take her back, then!?"

Crawling out of the lake, Rudel corrected the positioning of his waist wrap before turning to face Cattleya. Dripping with water, his facial features were well set from the start, making Rudel appear terribly dashing.

And he was almost naked.

Cattleya swallowed her breath.

“No, it seems she’s almost perfected it. Her sure-kill combo to take down the boss.”

‘Combo! What’s more, sure-kill!? Why didn’t you stop her, you idiot!’

As Cattleya’s dragon started acting up, Rudel soothed him to calm down. While he was carrying himself calmly, if one had to say who was mistaken, it was Rudel.

“I believe if it’s Sakuya, she’ll be fine. Even if she loses, she’ll surely get back on her feet!”

Rudel believed in Sakuya, but that didn’t make the red dragon happy at all. More than that, having her come at him for real would be a problem.

Even if he defeated Sakuya, there was the scary Mystith waiting behind her. It wasn’t by much, but he didn’t get the feeling he’d be able to win. So he feared winning this battle was the scarier option.

Losing to the newly-born Sakuya would be a disgrace, but it beat having Mystith after his life. Cattleya’s dragon teared up.

“Good grief, why are you so pitiful?”

‘Don’t screw with me! When it’s not even my fault, try thinking of the guy who’s going to get the crap kicked out of him!’

Seeing Rudel and Cattleya delightfully conversing, Enora’s feelings only turned needlessly darker. While she was mainly shouting at Rudel, both she and Rudel frankly spoke their minds, and Enora looked on it enviously.

It seemed to her that Cattleya possessed everything she could never have.

(Both father and Rudel, a talented demon sword holder... when I don’t have anything...)

Enora thought the sort of things that would make a knight who couldn't become a dragoon want to smack her. Yet suddenly, it all began to feel idiotic to her.

That attitude of Cattleya, who was pretty much a mass of talent, was one thing, but she couldn't even triumph over Rudel who claimed he had no talent at all. She knew from the start.

Enora had accurately assessed Rudel and feared him for it. Even if his dragon fell short of the others, Sakuya possessed many things the other dragons did not.

That's why she panicked when Rudel decided he wouldn't shirk his trainee responsibilities, yet still exerted himself to find a way to clear the test. While Enora did have a few parts to her different from other people, she had given Rudel a proper evaluation.

As if a thread was reaching its limit, she could almost hear the sound of it snapping.

It was at that moment.

Sakuya fell straight into the lake, with Mystith appearing a little later. With a fed-up look on her face, Mystith nonchalantly explained Sakuya's failed landing.

'That's why I told you. You have to lose altitude with care... you're in too much of a rush.'

Sticking her head out of the lake, Sakuya looked at Mystith.

'I mean...'

When a build as large as Sakuya's dived into the lake, the water that brimmed over rained down on everyone in the area. That water that advanced on them like a wave soaked them down to their socks.

As Cattleya pushed her hair to the side, she searched out Sakuya's partner, Rudel. She wanted to get in a complaint or two, but Rudel had already leapt at Sakuya.

"Sakuya, I was waiting for you!"

Sticking himself to Sakuya's head, Rudel began stroking her. Delighted, Sakuya

spoke proudly of her results in the northern sea.

‘Ahem! Sakuya has finally learned her sure-kill one, two, finish! With this, I’m sure I can defeat the boss!’

As Sakuya rejoiced, Rudel suddenly recalled something and scanned the area for the red dragon. But just as Rudel had, the red dragon had leapt off somewhere.

Leaving Cattleya behind...

“T-that stupid dragon!!”

Cattleya’s scream resounded through the forest.



With Sakuya’s preparations finished, they were to hurriedly return.

Mystith had some business to attend to, and Cattleya decided to ride on Sakuya’s back. This may have been because not a white horse, Rudel on his white dragon seemed to overlap just a bit with her own ideal.

In truth, Sakuya was large, and whether she ferried one person or two, it wasn’t much of a difference. Rudel was also returning, leaving behind his waist-wrap state for the first in a long while.

As the red dragon had run away, the soaked Cattleya had to borrow clothing from Enora. But while Cattleya wasn’t on the small side by any means, the breast area seemed to have ample space to spare.

“Are you ready?”

“I’m fine. Enora, you return first and give a report.”

After Cattleya finished dressing, she ordered Enora to return first and report. Enora saluted and followed orders, but she didn’t seem to have her usual smile.

Rudel was a bit mindful of that, but after straddling her wind dragon, the girl in question swiftly rose away into the sky.

“What’s wrong?”

Rudel looked up at the sky Enora disappeared into with a serious look on his face. His eyes were a little sorrowful.

“No, I just felt a little nostalgic.”

“Nostalgic?”

Cattleya was mindful of her chest as she mused. Rudel turned once towards Cattleya, peering deeply into her eyes.

“W-what?”

While her face turned mildly red as she averted her eyes, Rudel silently leapt onto Sakuya’s back. After a moment of surprise, Cattleya puffed up her cheeks.

Because while she had some light expectations, but Rudel didn’t do anything.

But to Rudel, it looked as if Enora overlapped with the Cattleya of the past. He understood as far as the fact the target of her hatred wasn’t him, but Cattleya this time.

From time to time, the look in Enora’s eyes would turn sharp, and that was only ever when Cattleya was there. The eyes once directed at himself were now pointed in Cattleya’s direction.

A little curious, Rudel situated himself on Sakuya’s back before lending Cattleya a hand up and questioning her.

“Is Enora a past acquaintance of yours?”

“Hah? Never heard of her. I’m pretty sure we were in the same year at the academy, but... oh, you have a thing for that girl? What are you going to do about black hair?”

Rudel didn’t seem bothered by Cattleya’s cynicism. His attitude irritated her. Yet Rudel’s profile she once detested, looking at it now, it was close to her idea.

Perhaps that only made him needlessly more irritating as she turned her face away.

“Sakuya, it’s about time to go.”

‘Yeah!’

Sakuya slowly floated into the sky, before giving her wings a few powerful beats. While she fell short of a wind dragon, or any other dragon for the matter of fact, Rudel liked the sensation of flying with Sakuya.

Her neck and back were furnished with the proper equipment for a knight to ride. Sakuya had run away, so she hadn't brought them along, but during his surveillance duty, Luxheidt had tactfully brought them a pair.

Cattleya felt just a little restless riding on the back of a different dragon.



In the air, Cattleya looked over Sakuya's back, getting a real sense of its breadth.

While Sakuya was giant from the start, from the point of view of a human, Cattleya's red dragon was giant as well. The first time she straddled his back, she felt it was endlessly vast as well.

But Sakuya was extraordinary. And therein lay the problem.

"It's considerably spacious, and stable, but... are we even moving?"

"Well, she was originally a gaia dragon subspecies, so please don't expect too much from the speed. But Sakuya's strength and destructive power are incomparable to the average dragon!"

"You've already told me that."

Tired of Rudel's praise for Sakuya, with the snail's pace they were going at, Cattleya was growing bored. She didn't usually talk much with Rudel, and she couldn't grasp how she was supposed to interact with him.

She was trying to apologize for what had happened before, but she had missed the right timing.

The feelings from back then, the hatred, the loathing, the desire to crush him, looking back on them now, she still couldn't understand them. She was informed she had been possessed by the black fog, but before the man she had hated, she found it quite hard to apologize.

Unable to be honest, Cattleya mustered her courage to give an earnest apology.... And it was at that moment that Rudel cried out.

"Sakuya, heads up!"

"Eh?"

‘Wowowhoa!’

Coincident with Rudel’s cry, Sakuya altered her flight path. There, from directly above them, a breath rained down. Those masses of magic a dragon would fire off came down on Sakuya in consecutive bursts.

What Cattleya saw when she looked straight up was the silhouette of a wind dragon. But they had already parted from the dragon dwellings, and it didn’t seem to be a wild dragon.

“Why...”

On the violent, rapid rotation of Sakuya’s back, she felt a weight she usually couldn’t feel. But she didn’t remove her eyes from the wind dragon assailing them.

During her surveillance of Rudel, she had noticed that Rudel and Sakuya would never be attacked by wild dragons. And yet, come so far, a dragon attacking them was strange.

If they didn’t anger it by trespassing on its turf, then she couldn’t comprehend the cause.

(This is bad... this child won’t be able to shake it off.)

Confirming they were dealing with a wind dragon, Cattleya concluded it was impossible for Sakuya to outrun it. The wind dragons were said to be the most lacking in firepower, but they boasted fearsome speed and aptitude in aerial battles.

Their rate of breath rapid fire was considered top-class among the dragon subspecies, and while there were differences among individuals, a dogfight put Sakuya at a disadvantage.

Among wild dragons, the ones with the greatest numbers were the wind dragons. within the dragoon brigade as a whole, among their wild dragons, the wind dragons were most numerous as well.

Knowing of Lilim’s wind dragon, Cattleya perceived the unfavorable ground over which they were hovering. And the enemy dragon was a young and powerful one.

That it was too young for its own good was perhaps their sole salvation.

Its breath didn't have the same power as Lilim's dragon. Its rapid fire had a ways to go.

"Rudel, keep dodging!"

As Cattleya looked at Rudel and issued orders, Rudel relayed those orders to Sakuya.

"Got it! Sakuya, don't let it set its aim. Go right into a zigzag and...! Raise altitude!"

Rudel suddenly changed his orders, but Sakuya managed to obey and swerved up. The wind dragon passed right below them.

In the moment Cattleya had taken her eyes off of it, the wind dragon had tried to grapple with Sakuya. Sticking onto a gaia dragon like Sakuya was, to put it bluntly, an idiotic act. The sort of action a normal dragon would avoid.

But at the moment their foe passed below them, Cattleya saw.

The fact that there was a person riding the dragon's back... and the fact that person was Enora.

"Enora... why are you...!"

Much faster than Sakuya's rise, Enora and her dragon climbed into the sky. There was no chance of defeating a wind dragon in the air. While they considered descending to the ground, they would simply be tormented to death by shots from up high.

"... Sakuya, we're subduing them."

"What are you talking about!? When even winning will be difficult, there's no way you can pin her down!"

While Cattleya refuted his words, Rudel's will was steadfast. And he didn't lack the means. No, he didn't need a plan from the start.

"You can do it, can't you, Sakuya?"

'I won't lose!'

As Sakuya roared in the sky, Enora's wind dragon fired a breath in response.

Chapter 103: The Dogfight and Discipline

Sakuya boasted the body of a gaia dragon subspecies, and she had grown bigger than even that.

While her length made her look slender, her torso was just about as thick as a gaia dragon's. And her powerful jaw was the same.

She only looked slender due to the sheer size of her body.

But her skin, a dragon's armor known as scales were exceedingly tougher than the average dragon. Even a gaia dragon's strength wouldn't be able to let her fly, and yet her four large wings could keep her airborne.

If you're asking what we're trying to say... looking at her latent abilities, Sakuya stood at the summit of the dragons. And Sakuya's soul was the soul of the 'Once-Goddess Sakuya'.

The body that became her vessel belonged to the strongest variant of gaia dragon.

Her heart had been passed from Cattleya to Lilim, to Fina, Sophina and Mii, and finally, she had inherited Sakuya's heart. While they were a somewhat problematic lot, she carried on the heart of proficient personnel.

By holding the soul and heart of Sakuya, she held feelings most closest to Sakuya, and the memories and the experiences definitely did exist somewhere within her.

While she was evaluated lowly as a dragoon, Sakuya was undoubtedly a goddragon.

Even if her evaluation was the worst, young as she was, she possessed abilities as a dragon that placed her in their upper ranks.



"Hey, why did you stop? If you stay like this, you're a sitting duck."

Sakuya roared, floating on the spot as if to wait for the wind dragon. It was proof that she was capable of hovering, and Rudel could feel Sakuya's growth.

“It’s alright. That output from before won’t be able to harm Sakuya... Sakuya, right!”

As Rudel issued orders, Sakuya answered them by holding her right arm out towards the wind dragon. While Enora took on a basic strategy of attack and move, Rudel chose to prioritize defense over evasion.

Sakuya took the wind dragon’s breath on the palm of her right hand undaunted.

Seeing Sakuya’s defensive prowess you could even call abnormal, Enora instantly changed her strategy. Perhaps intending to wear Sakuya down, as from a midrange battle of concentrated breaths, she changed over to close combat.

Flying around at a speed Sakuya couldn’t follow, she planned to aim at her back the moment she got the chance.

Even if Sakuya’s own back was heavily armored, Enora’s aim was Cattleya. Rudel had noticed where Enora’s eyes had been directed the whole time.

“Why is she challenging us to close combat? But that’s convenient, trying close combat with a gaia dragon is a madman’s plight.”

“No, it’s dangerous, so please lay low. And keep a firm grip on the lifeline.”

One usually wouldn’t initiate close combat with a gaia dragon. That was clearly the gaia dragon’s arena.

But knowing Enora’s aim, Rudel produced a shield of light to defend Cattleya. That large shield covered Sakuya’s blind spot to create an impenetrable fortress.

For the current Rudel, his shields of light could easily be destroyed by a dragon’s might. But he just had to use the time its destruction would buy them.

He could use that space to turn Sakuya around.

Perhaps his foe understood that as well, she wasn’t making any careless attacks.

“That Enora girl, just what is she doing?”

After looking at Cattleya glaring at the wind dragon gliding about the sky, Rudel succeeded in capturing Enora in his magic eyes.

After looking into Rudel's eyes, she vexingly issued her dragon orders in a way akin to a jeer.

"... Her aim is you, Lieutenant."

"Like hell. Are you saying I did something to her?"

While Cattleya took it out on Rudel, her expression was unperturbed. She was, in her own way, trying hard to remember what she could have done.

"No, I don't know the specifics either. But she despises you, Lieutenant Cattleya. That's the sort of eyes she was making."

Rudel recalled Cattleya's eyes of old. Often finding himself hated, Rudel could sense the emotions close to loathing that dwelled in those eyes.

"And why would you know...!"

Before Cattleya could continue on, Enora continued the rapid fire of her dragon's breath. Moving at her maximum speed, she fired that breath towards Sakuya as she changed her plan.

But Sakuya only changed her facing direction without doing anything else in particular.

'Come at meeee!!'

Knowing he couldn't just leave everything to Sakuya, Rudel produced a few dozen shields of light, using them to avert the breath attacks. Hit only once, they would explode and fade away, but he was able to counterbalance.

Those shields of light stationed to protect Sakuya gave off a glimmer, lending divinity to the form of the white dragon.



"Why, why is he protecting the likes of her!"

Unable to raise a hand against the iron wall that was Sakuya, Enora cried out atop the back of her own dragon. It wasn't as if she thought she could finish it with a surprise attack.

But she had never imagined she would be so hard-pressed.

Even if Rudel himself was proficient, she had misunderstood Sakuya as a failure. In essence, she had been convinced she could win with her own dragon's speed and rapid-fire breath.

But right now, she had yet to accomplish a thing.

If Enora's condition for victory was Cattleya's murder, then that was definitely not going to happen. At midrange, her attacks showed no effect, and at close-range, she had the disadvantage.

Even if she wanted to aim at Cattleya alone, Rudel's shields got in the way.

According to her dragon, it was more than possible to break them, but that would create an opening. Enora had picked a fight with the wrong foe.

If this was how it was going to be, then fighting Cattleya's red dragon would've given her a higher chance of victory.

But if she had challenged Cattleya and her partner red dragon, Enora would have been dead. That was just how great her gap in ability was from Cattleya.

'Kuh! What are we going to do, Enora!?'

On her partner's voice, Enora gave a slight smile.

"Having come so far, I'm going to face such a disappointing defeat... I'm sure it'll be quite the spectacle. The famed Campbell House is losing out against a single genius, after all."

Unable to win against Sakuya, Enora's dragon didn't think there would be this great of a gap in abilities either. There was a hint of impatience in his voice.

"Aha, why do I have to come so far and fail? I finally became a dragoon. I finally thought I would be recognized..."

Laughing as she shed her tears, Enora wiped her tears away before making a serious expression. Before her eyes was a shining dragon, and Cattleya being protected by Rudel.

"How irritating. At the very least, I wanted to steal her man."

Without noticing the fact she had been captivated by Rudel, Enora issued

orders to her dragon.

“Let’s go, Falk.”

‘... Very well. My pride won’t allow me to lose just like this.’

While they had no prospects of victory, Enora and Falk’s objective was Cattleya. Even if they couldn’t defeat Sakuya or Rudel, they wanted to fulfill that objective alone.

Falk thought the least he could do was fulfill Enora’s purpose. He understood that he wouldn’t be able to beat Sakuya. But from his pride as a dragon, he didn’t want to lose without doing anything.

As Falk started his attack on Sakuya, Rudel matched it and changed the positioning of his shields.



Cattleya was looking at Rudel’s back.

His form as he issued orders to Sakuya, shoddy as it was, it was beginning to take shape. From not being on her own dragon, she had felt some anxiety in Sakuya’s movements, but now, she didn’t feel it at all.

(Just how heavily armored is this child?)

An impossible level of sturdiness and the stamina to continue taking attacks. In that regards, Sakuya had gone beyond the level where she could make a comparison to her own dragon.

(This isn’t normal. But if it’s like this, then we won’t...)

The moment Cattleya determined they could win if they brought it to a war of attrition, Enora suddenly changed plans. Of all things, she tried challenging Sakuya to close combat again.

“That woman’s doing the same thing again...”

While Cattleya didn’t feel anxious, Rudel was different. He shouted a loud order for Sakuya.

“Sakuya, be careful, she’s coming!!”

Repositioning his shields, Rudel made it so Enora couldn’t enter their blind

spot so easily. Cattleya still hadn't shaken off the sensation of her own dragon.

With Sakuya, there was a limit to the speed at which she could react to her opponent wind dragon. If it was Cattleya's dragon, that wouldn't be a problem.

But right now, she was on Rudel's dragon, on the back of Sakuya.

The wind dragon that showed its maximum acceleration slipped into a spot diagonally back from Sakuya. Cattleya looked at that scene as if it were someone else's problem.

(Ah, crap.)

Understanding in an instant, from the fact she was the target and Sakuya's positioning, Cattleya realized she was in for it.

Just as she thought her life was a bit too short-lived, Rudel's voice resounded out.

"No, the other way, Sakuya!!"

As Cattleya was unable to hear Sakuya's voice, she had no idea what Rudel was telling her to go against. But she could feel it with her own body, how Sakuya's build suddenly wrenched to the left.

Just as the wind dragon's front claws were about to assail her, Rudel leapt at Cattleya. Thrown off of Sakuya's back, the two of them were cast freely into the air.

The moment they reached the end of the long belt called the lifeline was accompanied by an intense jerk.

Sakuya's movements had caused Enora to subtly miss the mark, saving Cattleya. Of course, Rudel putting his body on the line after that was yet another reason she was saved.

And the scene the two of them saw, fished along by the belt, was one of Sakuya's backhand hitting Enora's dragon as it passed by.

But more than that, Cattleya's face was turning red, being carried by a princess cradle as she hurtled through the sky.

(Hey! What's with this situation!!)

Unable to keep up with what was going on, Cattleya panicked; meanwhile, Rudel's gaze was locked on Enora, and her partner dragon.

As the dragon was blown away, Enora had been tossed from its back as well.

"This is bad! Sakuya, I leave the lieutenant to you."

Rudel removed the metal fixing him to his bely before using wind magic to head towards Enora. As she was told, Sakuya gently collected Cattleya up in her large hands, watching the scene of Rudel catching the blown-away Enora.

As Cattleya popped her face through the gaps in Sakuya's claw, she was making a bit of an irritated expression. Lifting off the hair stuck to her face with a finger, she pouted a bit.

"What's with him..."

A maiden for her age, it felt to Cattleya as if her prince had been taken away.



Catching Enora, who had been thrown into the air, Rudel made a landing in the forest that spread out below them.

As she let her tears flow in his arms, Enora was using both hands to hide her face. But her mouth was warped in vexation. Sobs were leaking from her mouth.

"... If you're able to answer, then please tell me. Why did you do something like this?"

Putting her down on the ground, Rudel warily leaned over her. While he was dealing with a crying woman, she was an elite dragoon.

Sakuya had gone off to pin down Enora's wind dragon, so Rudel decided to seize Enora.

Of course, the reverse was impossible, so even if it couldn't be called the best plan, it wasn't a mistake.

Because normally, Enora would have to be immediately restrained on the spot. By Rudel's compassion, Enora hadn't been bound.

"I-I'd jus ad enuff! So I..."

As Enora wept and answered, Rudel extended her a hand, patting her head, he spoke to her as he did to Lena whenever she cried when they were younger.

“I see, so you had enough. But do you understand what it is you’ve done?”

On Rudel’s words, Enora cried as she nodded.

Rudel couldn’t understand what she had enough of, but a dragoon had used her dragon for a personal affair. Just like Lilim before her, she wouldn’t be able to avoid punishment.

There, Cattleya appeared to confirm Enora’s situation.

“Rudel, Enora’s dragon has been restrained. When it’s being pinned down by your dragon, I doubt it’ll be able to run away, and it doesn’t seem to have the intent to resist.”

“Is that so.”

Hearing of Sakuya’s situation, Rudel had hopes that this might help build her self-confidence. Now the remaining problem was Enora.

“Lieutenant, for this matter,”

“Don’t even think about it. I understand what you want to say, and it’s definitely possible to save her. But listen here, when I was almost about to be killed by her, there’s no way I’d overlook it. What are you telling me to do about these feelings of mine?”

Cattleya didn’t seem to show any hatred towards Enora. More than that, her tone was one informing Rudel of the feelings of the victim.

Even if Rudel alone wanted to save her, Enora wouldn’t be saved.

Hanging his head, Rudel experienced his own lack of power... of authority. Just with the title of future archduke, he would probably be able to clean up this time’s mess.

But Cattleya was telling him that was no good. He would have to answer to that as well.

“... I’ll report the truth. But if possible, I’ll plead for her clemency.”

“Well I guess that works out? Whether you plead for clemency or not is up to

you. You're a victim here too, after all... just this once, okay. And this puts you in my debt."

Telling Rudel it was a loan, Cattleya forcefully stood Enora to her feet. While Rudel made a smile, when Cattleya immediately went into smacking Enora, his smile stiffened up.

"L-Lieutenant Cattleya?"

Seeing Cattleya stand before Enora, rolling across the ground after a few good blows, Rudel wasn't able to do a thing. Since Cattleya said she wouldn't report Enora's sins, he mulled over whether or not it was right to stop her.

"But we still have to give this girl a punishment."

Enora cowered from the terrifying smile on Cattleya's face.

"Don't worry, I won't make it public. But I'll be reporting to your papa."

"Eek!"

After that, until Rudel came in to stop her, Cattleya's fists showed no signs of stopping. While it was more decent than a possible execution, after that incident, Enora was unable to raise her head to Cattleya again.

Chapter 104: Discipline and Parent and Child

When Rudel returned to the dragoon lodging house, the active members were waiting for him.

The brigade members Alejandro led were knights of famed houses. That was Alejandro's faction, but in the dragoon brigade that couldn't help but be a meritocracy, there were many who hailed from low-status backgrounds.

In regard to Rudel going too far in this matter, he had called them to at least make a show of being harsh on him. This more or less included an intent to show their authority.

They wanted to show that Rudel was a dragoon of their own noble faction. On the other side, the knights of low status, and the nobles who didn't join any faction watched on from a distance.

There were those up to the heads of Viscount houses serving as active dragoons, but when it came to the level of Count, the head could never serve such a role.

For those in houses with status greater than Count, those without the need to succeed their houses might become dragoons. In contrast, Rudel was a future archduke.

From Alejandro's position, he could either add Rudel to his faction, essentially placing him as its leader, or form a connection. After announcing the strict punishment in store for him, he calculated as far as to save him from it and sell him a favor.

He had wrung out his knowledge that let him survive in noble society in his own way, but it was all in vain.

Seeing a ragged Enora and Falk, Alejandro's face turned red in an instant. A beaten dragon was one thing, but he couldn't forgive the fact his daughter's clothing looked strangely stripped.

The traces of treated wounds only made him lose his head faster.

"What happened!? Cattleya, explain this situation!"

As Alejandro became emotional, Cattleya expressionlessly approached to whisper into his ear.

“Vice-captain, you’d better clear away the others. By the way, if you fail to do so, you are the one who will be placed at the disadvantage.”

Glared at by Cattleya, Alejandro ended up faltering from her imposing attitude. While he didn’t show it on his face, he took to carrying out Cattleya’s orders.

Even if it wasn’t here, he had thought to sell a favor, but it was this side of him that prevented him from becoming captain.



Watching Alejandro lead off Cattleya, Rudel and Enora from afar, Oldart issued orders to one of his men.

Guessing the situation to an extent, it was largely as he had predicted, and he chose to take action.

“Oy, go fly to the palace as soon as possible. Tell them our little archduke’s come back.”

“Yes sir!”

Once the knight he ordered ran off, Oldart headed off towards his own dragon. Enora hadn’t returned beforehand to inform them of Rudel’s return, what’s more, both she and her dragon were in a terrible state.

While Sakuya wasn’t injured, there was soot on her scales.

He didn’t know the reason why Cattleya’s dragon was the first to return, but Oldart had a general idea of what was going on.

(That Enora girly snapped at either Rudel or Cattleya. From how they’re not reporting it... does Cattleya plan to play it off?)

When it came to Cattleya herself, while there were some problems with her personality, he saw her as proficient. And seeing how Cattleya didn’t report it first thing, he had a vague inkling that something had happened.

He had thought something was off from the moment Sakuya and Falk

approached the training grounds, when the dragoons on patrol hurriedly rushed over to him.

Oldart called a few of his subordinates and issued some more orders.

“Oy, once the future archduke finishes talking with the vice-captain, bring him over to me. I’ll be taking him right off to the palace, so give the vice-captain my regards. While you’re at it, call the former captain and vice-captain as well.”

“Yes sir! ... But captain, does the vice-captain know of this matter?”

As a knight returned a question to Oldart’s order, Oldart gave an ill-spirited grin.

“Like hell he does. I’ll be in the palace a while, so push all the small stuff onto the vice-captain. I’m sure our predecessors will be able to do something about him.”

Alejandro had a sense of hostility towards Oldart, refusing to obediently listen to his orders. But if the previous captain and vice-captain were involved, that was a different story.

Successfully pushing his work onto Alejandro, Oldart was in a good mood.

With light steps, he headed for his dragon, his men seeing him off with sighs on their breath.



In a meeting room on the training grounds, Rudel watched Alejandro take his anger out on Enora.

Taking the chairs and desk with her as she flew through the air, Enora slumped powerlessly onto the ground. While Rudel tried to stop him, Cattleya held him back.

She was calmly looking at Alejandro and Enora.

“Y-you stupid daughter! While being a proud dragoon, just what disgrace have you...”

Through her ruffled hair, Enora looked at her father’s rage. But not left with the power to respond, or perhaps lacking the intent, she didn’t open her

mouth.

“Not only did you use a dragon in a personal affair, you attacked a superior? Are you of sound mind!?”

Gripping his fallen daughter by the lapels, Alejandro lifted her up. Unable to watch anymore, Rudel stepped in to put a stop to it.

“Vice-captain, any more is...”

But as he stepped in, Alejandro screamed at him.

“This is a problem between father and daughter! You keep your mouth shut!”

On those words, Rudel ended up taking a step back. Before the relationship of father and child he couldn't possibly comprehend, he mulled over what sort of words he was supposed to call out.

Having barely ever talked with his parents, Rudel could only grip his fist and hand his head.

There, scratching her head, Cattleya entered the conversation.

“Vice-captain, this is no longer a problem of father and daughter alone. Both me and Rudel are victims, and your daughter is the perpetrator. And while my house is a Viscount house, Rudel's is an archduke house... the Campbell House is also a Viscount House, right?”

While Rudel didn't mind it, status was something a noble couldn't ignore. Even if they were dragoons, they were still but single knights, and of all things, Rudel was the victim in the matter.

“... My daughter will commit suicide.”

On Alejandro's mournful mutter, Rudel opened his eyes wide. But perhaps she just about understood it, as Cattleya didn't show any surprise.

“W-why is that!?”

It wasn't Enora but Rudel who drew close to Alejandro. There was some rage mixed into his voice, a rare sight of the usual courteous Rudel.

“I'm thankful that you won't make this matter public. But that doesn't resolve it.”

Rudel couldn't forgive Alejandro's explanation. It wasn't a problem he had the right to stick his mouth into, but he recalled the reason she had given for attacking Cattleya he had heard on the way back.

'I wanted to be recognized.'

Enora's twisted emotions had ended in a regretful, yet due outcome, but even so he couldn't forgive it.

"You mean for a parent to tell their child to die!?"

"That's what it's going to come to regardless! If that's how it's going to be, then if I, her father is the one to do it, we'll at least have an excuse to give to our ancestors."

Before Cattleya could stop him, Rudel leapt out.

His right fist sunk into Alejandro's left cheek, and in the next instant, Alejandro was flying through the air. This time, Cattleya opened her eyes in surprise.

"W-what are you doing!?"

Perhaps never considering he would hit him, Cattleya pinned Rudel down. Enora was also surprised by his actions.

"... Not being recognized really is painful. Not having anyone look at you really is miserable. But not being recognized by the one you wanted to look at you most is most painful of all!"

Sent flying, perhaps Alejandro never thought he would actually be hit, as he had been completely defenseless. As a result, he was knocked out on his impact with the wall.

"Seriously, what's with you! What reason did you have to hit the vice-captain..."

"With this matter, I've put the vice-captain in my debt. Now that I've hit a superior officer, that makes us even, right?"

"Like hell it does, fool! This isn't a child's brawl!"

By hitting the vice-captain, in the end, the problem was left hazy. Cattleya

apprehended Rudel and tossed him into a disciplinary cell.

After that, Oldart, who had grown tired of waiting, went to retrieve him.



“Gyahahaha, so that’s why Cattleya shoved you in a cell. But that must have been a nice blow. Feeling refreshed?”

I wanted to smack my superiors too, but don’t hit me, as Oldart said such things, Rudel was a little surprised. He thought he would be on the receiving end of something harsher.

From Cattleya’s attitude, he couldn’t believe Oldart’s correspondence.

‘Muh, Rudel didn’t do anything bad!’

Sakuya stuck up for Rudel as she flew, but Oldart was unable to hear her voice.

Temporarily released from his disciplinary cell, Rudel headed to the palace with Oldart.

“I deeply apologize.”

After thinking long and hard over it, Rudel felt he had done something wrong. Lowering his shoulders, he apologized to Captain Oldart. But he had yet to apologize for his stay at the dragons’ dwellings.

Oldart thought it was an apology including the dragon dwellings’ matter. But Rudel had assisted his partner dragon in her time of crisis, and he had no intention to repent over it.

“Well as long as you’re repenting, then isn’t that fine? Nothing good will come of punishing you, and on the contrary, ain’t it a good thing you put Alejandro in your debt? You probably shouldn’t have hit him, but compared to what Lady Enora’s been through, it’s nothing.”

As Oldart said it boldly, Rudel was filled with a sense of relief. But from Cattleya’s attitude, he still wondered if something was wrong with it.

“Is that really the problem?”

Understanding he wasn’t in the position to say anything about it, Rudel was

worried whether he had disrupted law and order.

“It’s fine. Those who’ve been recognized by the dragons, apart from me, they’ve all got a screw blown out of their heads. Just think about it... there’s no way a dragon would ever follow any decent human being. Besides me.”

Oldart spoke as if he had completely forgotten he was at the head of that group of lost screws. Meanwhile, Rudel was sending him a look of admiration.

It’s not as if that Alejandro hates Lady Enora. He did love her in his own way... well, as punishment, I guess she’ll be in the disciplinary cells for a week just like you?”

“I know it’s strange for me to say it, but will we really be let off with that?”

“As. I. Was. Saying. You’re a special case. I can’t treat you the same as the others. But personally, I do feel apologetic.”

As Oldart’s face turned serious, Rudel corrected his posture. He had already heard that Oldart had skillfully dealt with his and Enora’s cases.

Mixing in jokes, he laughed at how he was only decreasing his fighting force and increasing his own work. But even Rudel understood that Oldart was being tactful.

In that incident with the evaluations, and this time’s dragon runaway case, Oldart even wanted to apologize himself.

The envy and jealousy towards a future archduke had led to a harsher evaluation for Rudel. On top of that, Rudel himself was the white knight... but Oldart said he had no mind to put a stop to the current situation.

“This time’s evaluation was one thing, but to be honest, these sorts of things fall under the realm of everyday occurrence. If I spoke up to stop them, they’d only trouble you on a different front.”

“I’m sure.”

Recalling all that had happened, Rudel was unable to say it would be different. Even if he was seen as a future king, that alone would create opposing factions.

Among the commoners, there were many who resented the Arses House.

He wasn't just an individual, Rudel shouldered the signboard of the Arses House. Oldart was telling Rudel to show enough competence to blow those signs away.

"For better or worse, you aren't normal. And it'll be the same from here on... Lady Enora is one thing, but we have this thing called status. If this incident was perpetrated by a normal knight, I'm sure heads would fly. Rudel, you shouldn't forget that. What you're seeking is something outstandingly large."

"... I just wanted to become a dragoon, that's all I wanted. Well, when I tried, those around me didn't even try to recognize it. And now that I've become one, I've got around to thinking over things lately. Looking back on it now, it was a tad idiotic."

Come so far, Rudel recalled his youth. Everyone laughed that it was impossible. Everyone told him it would be impossible for him. And it was almost as if even the world wouldn't try to recognize him.

Within all that, the faces of those who recognized him floated up in his head.

Rudel tenderly stroked Sakuya's back. Recalling his promise with Sakuya, he looked ahead with eyes full of resolve.

"A young man's earnest dreams are a nice thing indeed. But you see, right now, you're a single dragoon. You'd best remember that... now then, that's enough for the lecture. You'd better think up some magic words to explain yourself away to the king and his men."

"It's alright! This is my second time!"

Recalling his student days, Rudel honestly answered Oldart. But perhaps the answer he wanted wasn't coming back, as Oldart was a little confused.

"T-that so..."

Oldart looked at Rudel and thought a bit.



It was a facility used by the dragoons, and Enora had been placed in a disciplinary cell.

In a corner of that narrow room, Enora sat scrunched up, burying her face

into the space between her knees. The clothes she wore had been switched out from a knight's garb to the crude clothing of a prisoner.

A few hours after she'd been placed in the cell, she heard the approach of a single set of footsteps. Enora knew those footsteps, they were steps that made her scrunch herself even smaller.

As she shrunk her body as far as it would go, those footsteps stopped before her self.

"How wretched it is."

"..."

Enora couldn't answer, but her body was shaking.

"It seems Oldart managed to play off the problem. Your sins will be forgiven with this cell alone I'm sorry."

After saying only that, Alejandro walked away from the cell. As if drawn in by those unexpected words, Enora made for the entrance of her cell, calling out to her father's back.

"Father, I-I'm..."

Turning back to his adult daughter, Alejandro simply nodded. He had noticed that his wretched was a word he had directed at himself.

"I'm a small man. The former captain and vice-captain had some choice words for me... good grief, they really have this job down. I should apologize to you as well. You're a daughter too good for me."

He gave a bitter smile, and after saying that, he made his way off. It seemed he was making quite an awkward face, but he wouldn't let her see his face in full.

Enora, upon hearing those words, she clung to the iron bars and let her tears flow.

"Sorry, I'm sorry... father..."



The captain and vice-captain left a record of that day.

In the years to come, they were used as documents to prove Rudel's unprecedented behavior, but that is surely a tale for another day.

'When I told him to make an excuse to the king as a joke, he said he was fine because it was his second time.'

'When I flew into a rage and hit my daughter, Rudel smacked me. My left cheek's swollen. It hurts. I can't go out in public.'

Having become a dragoon, and successfully entered their ranks, Rudel's legend went as follows.

'He destroyed the training ground facilities in his first years. After that, his dragon ran away, and he himself spent a few months in the dragons' dwellings. He smacked his superior officer, and after that, in the palace... at the unveiling...'

With half of his first year still to come, he had built up so many legends.

These documents would come under terrible scrutiny in later years. It was determined they were much too far from reality.

His second time explaining himself away to the king, and smacking a superior officer. It wasn't by much, but they weren't the most believable of events.

Normally, he should have been subjected to severe punishment, causing these events to be suspect to fabrication.

But as other documents detailed Rudel's further outrageous actions, the line between truth and fiction quickly lost its clarity.

Chapter 105: Inherited Feelings and Revived Fear

In the palace, King Albach who faced Rudel felt the situation was taking just a bit of a strange turn.

Once he learned that Rudel had returned, his authorities said they would have Alejandro take responsibility for this incident. Up to there, it was fine.

Oldart took on an evasive attitude to dodge the problem, and it simply ended with both sides exploring a compromise. But the problem started with Rudel's statement.

A strange flow had come about from the Queen, Ciel Courtois' cynicism.

"How pitiful, for the heir to an archduke house to let their dragon run away. And am I to understand that our pitiful future-archduke spent these past few months playing around?"

Once they learned that Rudel spent the past few months in the dragons' dwellings, those around held indignation. Opinions started flying around that he should have returned alone, that he wasn't worthy to be a dragoon.

At the authorities' words, Oldart directed a serious expression, but he arbitrarily turned their points aside. Within all that, a single statement from Rudel caused everyone's attitude to take a sudden change.

"No, by no means was I playing around! I was receiving instruction under Marty-sama's dragon Mystith in order to become the best dragoon I can be."

"Who's Marty-sama? I don't know this Mystith either."

While he proudly brought up Marty's name, Oldart was oblivious. But in exchange, the queen dropped the fan in her hands.

And the authorities... especially the old ones were shaking.

King Albach remained expressionless, but after clearing his throat once, he sought confirmation.

"Ahem, Rudel. Is it that... could you be talking about Wolfgang?"

"Yes. I am undoubtedly referring to Marty Wolfgang-sama! I've been in the

care of his beloved dragon Mystith, and..."

The king was acting blatantly strange at Rudel's words. The queen who had spat cynicism to that point seemed somewhat restless.

Even the authorities seemed to lose their momentum.

This was different from the flow Oldart was anticipating, the air in that space was clearly centered around Rudel.

"Where did you get to know about Wolfgang? I doubt there would be many a chance to learn of him..."

"I found him through 'How to Pet a Dragon'! That was a wonderful book, so wonderful I'm perplexed as to why it hasn't spread more. While I'm still immature, Mystith-sama has initiated me into the secret arts!"

"... I see. That's good."

"That has a lovely ring to it."

The queen's tone didn't sound as if she was congratulating him. More than that, she seemed fearful.

While Albach was lowering his shoulders for some reason, he decided to hold a conference on Rudel's punishment. For the sake of negotiation, Oldart had proposed three days in the disciplinary cells, and a few months of odd jobs after that.

He was told that was too light, and things were proceeding in a direction of taking in opinions from the authorities as well. But now, the authorities accepted Oldart's proposal as is.

"Then we're all fine with three days in disciplinary, and a few months of odd jobs after that, right?"

The king sought confirmation, the authorities simply nodded along. Among the authorities, a few young ones seemed unsatisfied, but the glares of the old men were doing their charm, forcing them to bob their heads.

"Right, now don't do it again, Rudel-dono."

The queen who had called him future-archduke sarcastically had changed a

bit. Come so far, she was even adding a dono to his name.

“I shall exercise the utmost caution.”

Together with Oldart, Rudel kneeled. Looking at the result, Rudel accepted a light punishment, but wouldn't have any further restrictions placed on him.



There was a reason the king and authorities would take on such inexplicable measures.

‘How to Pet a Dragon’, while its direction itself may have been mistaken, it was a book that held wonderful contents. But from its publication to the moment Marty left the world, it never received a proper evaluation.

The moment Marty was gone, the crown hurried to retrieve every last copy of the book.

Before the contents even came into question, they wanted to prevent the appearance of another dragoon like Marty. That had been tormented by Marty so thoroughly that they incinerated the collected books before they could check the contents.

The fact that one crossed into Rudel's hands was, surprisingly enough, so unlikely it could even be called a miracle.

Without placing emphasis on the book's title or contents, How to Pet a Dragon had been collected and burned out of fear of the author. The reason neither Cattleya nor Lilim knew of Marty was because his achievements were hidden up and recorded as the merits of many other dragoons.

If one did some digging, then quite a few things could come up, but those were things Rudel was only able to find out precisely because he was the heir to an archduke title.

To the country of Courtois, Marty and Mystith were nothing more than a symbol of fear. Both stories were frantically covered up.

In Courtois, where its national defense was maintained by the dragons, Marty was the man who led their dragon force to return to their dens.

Mystith was a dragon with enough power to rule over the others. To add on

to that, the palace at the time was even destroyed by Mystith.

The era's royal family was somehow able to quell the situation by getting on their knees, but to make sure that fear was never forgotten, the knowledge was passed down to their successors and leaders of history.

It was here that the fact the white knight was a worshipper of Marty stuck into them.

Even now, they hadn't the opportunity to learn that the second princess looked up to the dragoon long lost.

All that could be said was that a fear of over a hundred years passed had been revived.



Having returned to his disciplinary cell, the formalities and questionings were enough to make three days go by.

Placed in the cell next to Enora, he did nothing but concentrate his spirit, sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed in meditation. But Enora next door leaned on the wall and called over to Rudel.

"You got off quite lightly. The new has even reached here. That you threatened the king."

"... I didn't threaten anyone. I just told the truth."

From Rudel's point of view, he hadn't made any threats, but the royal family and authorities were in fear. There was no doubt they felt threatened.

"I see... I really am sorry."

From her prior joking tone, she changed to something a bit solemn. Sensing Enora's feelings, Rudel answered them.

"It's gone and done with. I don't mind it. Though I do feel sorry for punching the vice-captain."

"Don't worry about that one. It was quite refreshing, after all."

Hearing Enora laugh, Rudel felt just a little relieved. Because it wasn't the possessed expression or voice she had always carried, it was a voice as if an evil

spirit had released its hold.

“Though I made Lieutenant Cattleya angry. Said I should show some discretion... Once the vice-captain calmed down, he said he’d try pleading for your clemency, it seems. Said that way would be more effective.”

“Ah, that sounds like him. I’m sure my father wanted to make a debt as well.”

The two of them laughed across the wall. It was there that Rudel recalled what Oldart had said. He didn’t understand it, so he wanted to use the opportunity to ask Enora about it.

“Right. When it comes to the lieutenant, the captain said something... Enora, do you know what he meant by, ‘Boomerang Cattleya’? The Captain laughed as he said it, but I’m unable to understand.”

“... Boomerang, you mean...”

(TL: In Japan, this is a phrase that pretty much means you end up attacking yourself much more than you attack the enemy.)

Once Enora explained it, Rudel finally got it. Sure enough, there were times where one got the urge to tell someone to say that to a mirror.

As Oldart never put a gag order on it, Rudel ended up reporting the matter to Cattleya after he got out of the cell. Because of that, Cattleya’s moniker in the dragoon brigade was changed to Boomerang Cattleya for a while.

After that, Oldart was chased around by Cattleya. The words he uttered...

‘Gyaaaah! The boomerang came back again!’

It’s said he was surprisingly enjoying it.



When Rudel left the disciplinary cell, the preparations were finally together.

While Rudel was gone, an anxious Sakuya made use of the dragon stables reserved for those of Major or above. Even if you said she was using it, she simply dug out a new sleeping space.

Her preparations were ready, she was finally going to challenge the other dragons.

She had made her certain-kill one two finish her own, and fighting on disadvantageous conditions, she had attained victory over a wind dragon. She had some confidence now.

‘G-get out here! Sakuya is annngry!!’

“That’s the spirit, Sakuya, let’s show them all your power today!”

Rudel standing to her side encouraged her.

From the eyes of those around, it was a lonely sight, as if he was talking to himself next to a roaring dragon.

The dragons of the stable showed no signs of coming out.

Rudel had already confirmed that the dragons not on duty were in the stable. He had chosen a day he knew Cattleya’s red dragon would be there.

‘T-today Sakuya is going to defeat the boss and become the new boss!’

“Keep at it, Sakuya!”

But the dragons wouldn’t come out. A while passed, and perhaps Sakuya’s fruitless howls were beginning to feel lonely as she burst into tears.

‘Please come out...’

“S-Sakuya...”

Even with Rudel next to her, patting her leg to cheer her up, Sakuya was losing her spirit.

“Good grief, just what are they doing?”

The one who approached with a fed-up face was Cattleya. If Sakuya roared, whether they liked it or not, people would gather. It would be bad if she ran away again.

“Lieutenant, the truth is, Sakuya is trying to challenge the boss of the dragon stables, but your dragon isn’t coming out. Could you give it a call?”

Seeing a restless Rudel before a weeping Sakuya, Cattleya felt even more fed-up.

“Why do I have to call Bram out? It looks like your dragon’s gunning to kill

him, so no.”

“I’m begging you!”

“F-fine.”

As Rudel gripped Cattleya’s right hand in both hands, desperately pleading to her, Cattleya averted her face away from Rudel.

She changed her opinion just a little bit and assented. Sensing that exchange from within the dragon stables, Bram cried out at his own contractor.

But to Rudel, it only sounded like the roars of a dragon’s heart.

“Shut it! Get out here already, and you call yourself a man!?”



The dragon stable was populated by gray dragons, with a few wild dragons on the side.

In it were both Cattleya’s red dragon Bram, and Enora’s dragon Falk. While there were others, they had run off saying they weren’t relevant.

Bram was the boss of the dragon stables, while Falk couldn’t move from the wounds he suffered at Sakuya’s hands.

‘Goddammit, that woman... she sold me out to Rudel.’

Letting his tail alone protrude from the straw, Bram was truly scornful. Falk had already suffered a blow, and a single strike had put him into a considerably terrible condition.

Even if wind dragons weren’t specialized to defense, this was abnormal. Sakuya’s offensive power was way too high.

‘In the first place, I have nothing to do with this!!’

‘Why don’t you give up already?’

‘Shut it, whelp! You can only say that because you don’t know her true terror... the true terror of the one behind her, fool!!’

While Bram was counted as a young dragon, Falk was an even younger male. In his confusion, Bram stuck his head out of the straw and looked at the gray

dragons around.

‘This is you guys’ fault, dammit!’

‘No, but, you see?’

‘You normally wouldn’t think that giant was a child.’

‘And wait, what’s with that destructive power?’

A majority of the gray dragons had burns on their surface on top of being beaten up. Even like that, they would recover in a few days, so they were dragons as well.

‘You domesticated cattlee!!’

The dragon stables generally only took red and wind dragons. Water and gaia dragons lived in special environments.

The water dragons loved the water, and the gaia dragons found solace in the earth... the two species were given a different stable.

There was a movement outside. Apart from the Cattleya, who had sold him out to Rudel through her maidenly affection, he heard another voice he didn’t want to hear.

‘Ah, Mystith-sama.’

‘Mystith~, no one’s coming out.’

‘You let Sakuya cry again. Good grief...’

‘Why is a wild dragon here?’

‘Shit, she really did come.’

Bram felt as if his red face was turning blue, but the other gray dragons were clearly going pale as well. The young gray dragons who didn’t know Mystith didn’t show any particular change.

More than that, those young ones still had leisure. The one Sakuya was challenging was Bram, and they were sure they were irrelevant.

‘Oy, oy, what’s with this. It’s just one more lizard, right?’

‘She’s quite an old hag to boot.’

‘Bram really is pitiful.’

‘You, the one who dropped my honorific, I remember your face. No, I have to

do something about... GYAAAAAH!!'

'Ah, boss is heeeeeeere!'

'Please forgive us, boss!'

As Bram raised a scream and burrowed into the straw, a single large dragon appeared at the stable entrance.

The other gray dragons that knew Mystith raised screams as they pleaded for forgiveness.

If they were able to tell the outside situation from within, she was able to tell the inside situation from out there.

With her body a size larger than the other dragons, Mystith entered the dragon stables that began to feel narrow, before opening her mouth to speak. There was light streaming in from the entrance, and her open mouth almost seemed to be smiling.

But her eyes weren't smiling at all.

'Gentledragons of the stables, come~ out~ and~ play~.'

Her words were stretched as if she was mocking them, but that only made Bram all the more fearful.

Chapter 106: Revived Fear and a New Ruler

‘I’m telling you to get out there already! You damn brutes!’

‘This has nothing to do with me!’

‘Cut the crap! The moment you overlooked it, it was your responsibility, fool! If you’re the boss of the dragon stables, then take some damn responsibility!’

‘Now ain’t that overbearing!’

On standby outside, Rudel and the others could hear the sounds from the dragon stable. To those that could hear their voices, they picked up on Bram’s bitter cries.

Even to those who could not, they heard Mystith’s roars of rage and Bram’s sorrowful whimpers.

The other gray dragons were also letting off cries reminiscent of screams, but none of them tried to go outside.

‘Waaah, so Sakuya’s a no good dragon after all.’

“That’s not true! You’re a splendid partner.”

While Rudel comforted a depressed Sakuya, in the next instant...

‘Quit your complaining and get out there, dammit!!’

Perhaps Mystith had reached the end of her patience as a large amount of water flooded out of the dragon stables. Just like that, the building was blown away as if it had been detonated.

The surrounding area was beset by a wave of water that flowed from the stables.

Rudel was also soaked up to his ankles. But there, it seemed that the building wasn’t the only thing blown away, the gray dragons were also blown off, now sprawled out over the ground.

For Bram alone, Mystith had grabbed him by the tail and dragged him out.

‘Good grief, causing me so much trouble... Sakuya, I brought him, so get ready

for a duel.'

"Y-yeah!"

Seeing Sakuya's delight, Rudel pat his chest in relief. But Cattleya standing to her side had a stiff expression on her face.

"R-Rudel."

"Yes?"

With a cramped smile, Cattleya grabbed Rudel's shoulders, turning him-body and all-towards the place the dragon stables once stood.

In that space, nothing more than a few pillars remained. The water Mystith produced had washed away the walls, the tools and the roof, along with everything else, it seems.

Seeing that scenery, Rudel was impressed. In that situation, Mystith managed to instantly manifest a single strike of water with such destructive power, and he sent her his honest admiration.

"What do you think when you look at that?"

"Mystith-sama is amazing! Ow! ... Lieutenant, if you're going to hit me, please tell me your reasons."

Seeing Rudel's face that showed he really didn't understand, Cattleya's eyes grew teary as she lowered her second fist onto Rudel's head.



While Bram was already in tatters, he was forcefully dragged by Mystith out before Sakuya.

Bram knew Sakuya's situation. It's precisely because he knew, that he understood just how dangerous this match would be.

His opponent Sakuya was a goddragon of all things, and she had undergone Mystith's tutelage. Speaking to her quality as a dragon, she was the sort of existence who would surpass him a mere few years after her birth.

He was truly pissed off at the gray dragons who looked down on and teased Sakuya.

‘I definitely don’t think I’m at fault. You get where I’m coming from, right?’

As if clinging on to his last hope, Bram brought Sakuya to the negotiations table. But his opponent was one who had been brought up by Mystith.

There was no way talks would go through.

‘Yeah! But if I don’t beat you, they’ll make fun of Sakuya, so I’m sorry!’

‘No one’s going to make fun of you again! These yellow bastards don’t have the guts to pick a fight with the gal who blew away the training grounds!’

Right, when Sakuya blew away the training grounds, the gray dragons had realized. That if they picked a fight with her, they would die...

Even the red dragon Bram feared her. If a gray dragon tried fighting her normally, there was no way to win by normal means.

Suddenly turning timid, the thought crossed Sakuya’s mind that if she wouldn’t be made fun of, she wouldn’t have to fight. She sent a glance towards Rudel and Mystith.

There, Rudel was having both his shoulders grasped by Cattleya, having his body violently shaken left and right as he received a lecture. But his face was turned towards Sakuya, and he clenched his right fist to encourage her.

It was clearly a pose telling her to fight. Bram wasn’t expecting much, but when he looked at Mystith...

‘Sakuya Go!’

Punching the air, she fired Sakuya up. He didn’t expect the slightest from his own contractor, but still, he sent her a pleading glance.

“Why are you so off-point!? How can you look at that scene and say with a straight face the dragon is amazing!?”

She was too busy with Rudel, not even paying the slightest mind to Bram.

‘So my contractor is the worst of all.’

The red dragon’s shoulders dropped, but he considered seriously fighting the white one before his eyes. Despairing that there was no one to save him, Bram hardened his resolve.

‘Sakuya won’t lose!’

‘Dammit to hell!!!’

Turning desperate, Bram turned towards Sakuya. He had been challenged to a fist fight, and as long as Mystith was there, if he unleashed a breath attack, he would be killed.

And if he had Sakuya lift the breath ban, he would probably be killed.

If he tried to bring it to an aerial battle or ran from the spot, Mystith would chase him down. Be killed by Mystith, or smacked by Sakuya... those two choices stuck deep into the dragon Bram.

As a result, deciding that closing in held the highest chance of his own survival, the red dragon charged straight at the gaia dragon subspecies.



Before the certain-kill combo, Bram was sent flying by the first strike. It was only by the miss of the second blow that Sakuya and those around noticed the first had blown him away.

Blown away by a blow from her left hand, Bram was left with his upper half stuck into one of the dragoon facilities. But appearing after he heard the explosive sound of the facility’s destruction, Alejandro was frozen with his mouth wide open.

“W-Who did it!!”

Come so far, the training ground along was a huge problem. On top of that, it wasn’t just the dragon stables, the building next to it was half-destroyed.

But what surprised Alejandro most was the gray dragons who were in the stables.

They were all lined up before a single water dragon. That much was fine.

But therein lay the problem. The water dragon went down that line of gray dragons, smacking each of them hard in turn. The gray dragons were so fearful they didn’t even think to escape.

They were hit one after the next, collapsing on the spot. The country’s

valuable war potential was being rapidly chipped away.

It was a scene Alejandro couldn't comprehend. No, a scene he didn't want to comprehend.

"O-Oldart!!"

Crying out the captain's name, Alejandro ran off from the spot.



Charged with the responsibility of the dragon stable and neighboring building's destruction, Rudel was put to cleaning up the building's remnants.

To Rudel's side, Sakuya was helping out as well.

Generally speaking, Dragons boasted powers greater than human. Used no differently than heavy machinery, Sakuya was practically a flying bulldozer.

The work was proceeding quicker than expected.

'When Sakuya won, why does she have to clean up?'

After she had finally achieved victory, Sakuya was dissatisfied she had to tidy up as punishment. But there was no helping that one.

The other dragons were bedridden. They weren't in a state where they could be put to work.

"You destroyed it, so there's no helping it. But you were really cool today, Sakuya."

'Sakuya is an amazing dragon!'

As Rudel praised her, the word speed went up. Happy from the praise, Sakuya swung her tail around, hitting the half-destroyed building, and increasing the amount of rubble.

If he was ever given such a mission, it would probably best to let her calm down a bit before going to work. Rudel thought over the future as he soothed Sakuya, who had grown depressed again.

(We went too far. But, well...)

Looking at Sakuya's mood go up and down, Rudel's face slackened.

He did feel some responsibility for destroying the stables and adjacent building, but if he showed it on his face, Sakuya would feel down again.

While she was a goddragon, Sakuya had one large flaw.

A soul much too young.

Despite being a newborn, Sakuya was born with abilities that ranked her highly, even among the dragon, a terribly dangerous notion.

(I guess I have to support her up.)

The reason Mystith showed excessive care towards her wasn't only because she had made a contract with Sakuya before she was reborn a dragon.

She understood that Sakuya's future would be important to the dragon race.

She placed restraints on the gray dragons because they were a bad influence on the girl. In that sense, Bram was the same.

This was a tragedy brought forth from the fact that Bram didn't truly understand Sakuya's value.

Mystith didn't want to suddenly make Sakuya boss of the dragon stables either. But in the dragoon brigade that currently only had young dragons, she determined that Sakuya's upbringing would be impossible.

Mystith's teaching of Rudel wasn't completely due to his adoration of Marty.

For Sakuya who would one day stand at the pinnacle of dragons, she wanted him to be a worthy partner.

Rudel understood it as well.

But he also understood that even if he scolded the current Sakuya for destroying the building, it wouldn't have an effect.

Little by little, over the course of time, he would have to teach her.

'... I broke it again. Rudel, I'm sorry.'

'It's fine. No problem... be careful next time (now then, what am I supposed to say to the palace).'

For better or worse, the dragoons often ran into these sorts of problems.

They were the link that bound the country to the dragons.

They served to mediate between the palace and the dragon race. And that meant there was trouble to be had between the palace, and the dragons who boasted a different sense of values from humans.

Destroy buildings in the enemy camp, don't destroy the country's buildings.

With an order as simple as that, a dragon wouldn't understand what was being said. While they had intelligence, it was the dragons who lived in a world separated from human common sense.

If they obediently listened to human orders, then the dragoons wouldn't be necessary in the first place.

(If I want to make sure the top brass don't direct their dissatisfactions at Sakuya... then that's probably the best way to go.)

Continuing on his rubble removal work, Rudel decided to direct the higher up complaints towards himself.



"... I never thought we'd be meeting again so soon."

"It has been a while, your majesty."

The one Rudel kneeled to was Albach. Albach hadn't even considered he would be calling Rudel back in less than a week.

You could also say he didn't want to think about it.

Unable to use the audience chamber, he called Rudel to an informal meeting in the room the authorities would usually use for meetings.

Destroying one dragoon facility after the next, he had raised a true crisis where their valuable dragons would be unusable for a number of days.

If saying it to the dragons Mystith and Sakuya wouldn't get anywhere, then there was no choice but to summon the contractor Rudel.

One of the authorities made a bitter face, placing his documents on the table to question Rudel. But his face was tinted with just a bit of fear.

"Just how much collateral damage to you intend to create in half a year?"

“... My apologies.”

“An apology isn’t going to cut it! The dragon stables your dragon destroyed, the adjoined facilities, and even the training grounds. They were all amenities with some good money invested into them!”

As one of Courtois’ elite forces, the dragoons did have a considerable budget sent around to them. But no matter how they cut it, the facilities Rudel destroyed weren’t the sort of thing the dragoon brigade’s annual budget would be able to cover.

On top of that, the dragoons were a knight brigade Courtois couldn’t do without.

The kingdom had no choice but to supply the funds.

“If I may. Let’s give up on the dragon stables. They’re dragons, after all, so it shouldn’t be much of a problem if you have them camp out.”

At Rudel’s proposal, the authorities held their heads. They wanted to raise their voices and cry out, ‘That isn’t the point!’...

In fear of Sakuya and Mystith, despite everything, they were still holding themselves back. Originally, they wanted to tack on a reason and have Rudel restrained in the palace as soon as possible.

But the problem was Sakuya, who had been trained by Mystith. Mystith had past precedent of destroying the palace, and accepting Sakuya, who could be called her disciple into the palace was out of the question to them.

That being the case, if they pulled the Marty-worshipper Rudel away from Sakuya, there was no telling what would happen.

The country’s upper brass was unable to meddle.

Albach endured his urge to let out a sigh as he reported to Rudel.

“Rudel, the country’s funds are not unlimited. I’m sure you know that. From now on, please hold back on... please refrain from any destructive activities. Of course, when on a mission, you can wield those powers as you see fit.”

They were dealing with dragons, so a level of damage was expected. But Albach remembered Sakuya was no trifle. When cleaning up the half-destroyed

facility, she had made it a full-destroyed one.

“Yes sir!”

Rudel’s perfect etiquette only irritated the authorities more.

They wanted something more to scold him on, but he was perfect in that regard. In truth, while he did have a few strange parts to him, if looked at as a knight, Rudel was the ideal.

The crown and authorities lamented that he looked up to the wrong individual.

Once Rudel left the meeting room, Albach folded his hands over the table. And worn out, he lowered his head.

His form, based on how one perceived it, could look as if he were praying.

“Wolfgang... even in death, you torment Courtois all the more...”

While the higher-ups of Courtois despised Marty, surprisingly enough, his military achievements were on a legendary level. But not only did his unprecedented behavior balance out his achievements, it actually brought him into the negatives.

Alongside Mystith, he had defended the country from Gaia Empire invasion time and again. From the fear of that time, Marty’s name was famous throughout the empire.

Within the Empire, Marty was called the ‘Demon of Courtois’ and held as a symbol of fear. Nothing but trouble to his surroundings, and rightly feared by his enemies.

That was the man called Marty Wolfgang.



After Rudel returned from the palace, an evaluation exam was held.

The time to show the results of the past few months had come around, but the surrounding atmosphere was completely different from last time. All the dragoons had called their partner dragons to their side.

They were ready to run away at a moment’s notice.

But...

“You’re doing good, Sakuya!”

‘My hovering is perfect!’

While Sakuya cried out in glee, she was unsteadily swaying in the air. It was still shoddy, but she displayed ample competence.

Following on from that was shooting, but in that, only sturdy frames were built. The disposable targets were draped over them. On top of being cheap to produce, they were cheap to maintain.

Oldart’s desperate thoughts had somehow kept it within budget.

Everyone was sure those would be destroyed as well, pitying Oldart’s efforts.

But...

“Great work! Six out of ten. That’s just barely a passing grade!”

‘I did it! I did it!!’

Delighted, Sakuya roared on the spot, and the surrounding dragons roared along. It wasn’t the scornful roars they had used to that point, they were honestly singing praise.

The tattered dragons were praising Sakuya. This was proof that Sakuya was the new boss, their way of showing there was no one who would go against her.

But Bram and Falk’s injuries were more severe than expected, and they were still in treatment. This fact became an even greater factor preventing the gray dragons from going against Sakuya.

The dragoons around were making dubious faces.

No, to be more precise, they were happy that Rudel and Sakuya managed to pass without any collateral damage. Some part of them was simply struggling to accept it.

“So they can do it and succeed the proper way.”

At the words Luxheidt muttered, everyone in the training grounds loud from the roars of dragons nodded.

They were happy that Sakuya managed to clear the exam without incident, but they had been expecting some more exorbitant actions.

They had been enthusiastically preparing to cope with whatever they threw at them, but they ended up clearing it the normal way.

With this unexpected turnout, they felt just a little lonely.

Chapter 107: Friends and Cleaning Duty

In preparation for the display held every year in the capital, the newly recruited knights had gathered.

While the elite dragoons were the centerpiece every year, of course, the other brigades took part as well. It also had a purpose of increasing national prestige, but for the other elites, the high knights, this was likely the last year they could take part.

The dragoons, the royal guard, the high knights, with three special elite forces prepared, it was a fact that Courtois didn't have any further financial leisure.

It was around the time where many knights were arriving at the capital.

The dragoon brigade was practicing its flight formation.



"T-that's dangerous, Rudel!"

Hearing Luxheidt cry out, Rudel immediately issued orders to Sakuya.

"Sakuya, you're drifting!"

'Wowowoah!'

Rise, descend, turn, in everything, Sakuya brought trouble to her surroundings. A single change in the flap of her wings might blow the surroundings dragons and dragoons away.

It was proof she was putting in a needless amount of power, and every time she heard Rudel's warnings, Sakuya would move as if squirming in the air.

Those movements weren't quite the sort of thing the residents of the capital would be pleased with. The residents who watched the flight formations every year had become quite the connoisseurs.

In the event's goal of increasing national prestige, they couldn't disappoint those watchful eyes. But from her fame, it was difficult to remove the splendid form of Sakuya.

Rudel was the white knight, and Sakuya was his giant dragon partner. Her white and beautiful form was enough of a show in itself. To add onto that, throughout the country, white knight Rudel and black knight Aleist had been publicized.

There was no way they could pull him out now.

... But.

“Rudel! Don’t come over he... gyaaah!”

This time, Sakuya approached Saas, who was on the opposite side from Luxheidt. As Saas hurriedly withdrew from his station, the other dragons commenced hovering.

“S-sorry.”

Rudel apologized to the two of them. Today alone, they had interrupted training over ten times.

‘S-sorry.’

Rudel and Sakuya had managed to receive a C-Rank, but they were causing problems in flight formations as well.

The new recruits flying in formation was a simple way to show the royal capital’s residents the competence of the dragoons.

But if they failed, on the contrary, it was a show of their low degree of training.

Sakuya was a gaia dragon subspecies, and her flight capabilities were expected to fall short of the other dragons. But to put on a show, it was decided she would fly at the center of the new recruits.

If safety was their first priority, then flying in a straight line without any tricks was their best bet.

It was a problem that made the dragoon brigade collectively hold their heads as a whole.



“You mean to say you’re taking us off the formation!?”

In the vice-captain's office, Rudel raised his voice as Alejandro informed him of what had been decided.

If she knew she was taken out of the formation, Sakuya would get depressed again. The fact he knew of how hard she was training only strengthened his desire to do something for her.

"There can be no helping it. And you'll be appearing at the end to descend down onto the plaza. If that's all there is do it, I doubt you'll fail."

"Certainly, I don't think we'll fail, but..."

He understood what Alejandro was trying to say. He did, but it was a fact he couldn't accept it.

"You'll be adorning the center of the plaza at the end, it's quite an important role. Our flight formations are officially meant to be a side show, but they have a considerable history to them. We've been holding them for over sixty years."

The historic dragoons would enchant the crowds with their craft.

Alejandro was also making an enervated expression and it seemed he'd been mulling over the formation quite a lot as of late. Not wanting to cause any more trouble for his superior officer, Rudel accepted it.

"... Understood."

"That's a huge help. You're just going to tie a bow on the performance at the end, but don't fall behind in practice, okay? Think of it as flight training, and you'll never find it wasted."

Rudel left the room, mulling over how he was going to explain it to Sakuya.

When he thought one problem had been cleaned up, the next one came out.

He couldn't quite lie, but telling Sakuya nothing but the facts felt would be too cruel. Rudel mulled over what to say to persuade her as he walked down the hall.

It was there that a voice called out over to him.

'Well now, I've finally gotten the members together. Let's start preparing for our flight formation already.'

He looked out the window just in time to see Mystith's descent.



... A few days later.

In preparation for the unveiling the day after tomorrow, knights had gathered from all over the land.

A large portion of them were new recruits, youths who had only just ventured into the world. From them came out some who wanted to stretch out and relax in one of the capital's high-class pubs.

To the knights from the outskirts, there were barely any chances to come to the capital. It couldn't be helped that some would think of using this chance to play around.

Yet what that gathering stared at loathsomely were the knights who worked in the capital from the start.

Unlike their standard knight garb, that gathering that wore high-class garments over their bodies were members of the unit led by Eunius.

Liking his share of revelry, Eunius didn't hate this atmosphere at all. But it seemed that wasn't the case for those around them.

"Looks like we've got ourselves a rowdy bunch."

"My thoughts exactly, this is why those country bumpkins are nothing but trouble. They should go find a store befitting their stature."

"... That so (That's not what I meant)."

As part of a knight brigade charged with the defense of the capital, Eunius was appointed as a major.

He was the future head of an archduke house, given considerable preferential treatment... or not. The ones stationed under Eunius were young nobles. They were a unit of those who were determined to be of no particular use.

With their status, it was too difficult to order them around, so Eunius had been stationed to put a hold on them.

(Even if I'm returning to my house in a few years, this is harsh.)

Their low level of training went without saying, their usual work ethic was also truly terrible.

Reminiscing over his student days, he downed the ale poured into his glass. Fitting of a shop the knights of the palace and capital had taken a liking to, he had no complaints about the ale or food.

But in this air, it all tasted strangely unsavory. That's all there was to it.

The ones around Eunius were knights who had been stationed for a few years now. His followers from the academy were treated as new recruits and had all the miscellaneous jobs shoved onto them.

Now there were just the folks constantly gathering to curry the favor of the future archduke Eunius.

"They really should learn to carry that thing called elegance."

"Precisely. As a fellow knight, I feel ashamed."

"To think even demi-human knights would come, they're dropping the status of this shop."

As Eunius endured the surrounding atmosphere, the civil servant Luecke made his appearance. Everyone around Eunius instantly directed hostility.



Finishing his civil official work, Luecke was taken along by his seniors to a certain shop.

Usually, he would return to his estate in the capital, occupying the rest of his day with work or books. But thinking that socialization was also important, he accepted their invitation that day.

(Just goes to show you shouldn't do what you're not used to.)

There were many of the Halbades House's faction among the civil officers, and they treated Luecke with care. But with his work capabilities, Luecke found himself working as part of their main force.

He had worked overtime today, so they had likely shown some tact.

The officials were immensely busy over the display in two days. But it just had to be that day that they encountered the ones they didn't want to meet.

“Hmm, look, the beansprouts have come out.”

As one of Eunius’ subordinates let out a voice such to resonate through the rowdy shop, the surroundings instantly went quiet. A large number of customers showered Luecke and his compatriots with their gaze.

Generally speaking, civil and military officials didn’t get along.

“Yeah, let’s change shops.”

One of his seniors tried to leave with a troubled look on his face, but from among his comrades rose a voice of dissatisfaction.

“You’re going to quietly run away!?”

There, Luecke purposely brought his feet to a chair nearby Eunius. Pressured by the atmosphere of Eunius’ group, everyone had been avoiding the seats in the area.

So the only open tables were around Eunius.

“You’re not going to order?”

Ignoring the looks from Eunius’ men, Luecke cast a silent pressure onto his seniors. Timid as they were, those seniors began to take their seats.

To the current Luecke, knight brigades were nothing more than money devouring insects. Especially Eunius’ unit that served no particular purpose, to put it bluntly, he thought it was fine if they got thoroughly crushed.

He understood they were a necessary evil. But his dissatisfaction built up.

When Eunius’ unit caused problems, they multiplied the work of the civil officials. They’d tack on some reason for high-class goods, and demanded that their equipment was first rate, despite no other part of them matching up.

The current Luecke and Eunius were undoubtedly political opponents.



With cleaning implements in hand, Aleist walked down the palace corridor with his subordinates.

He had cast off his outercoat, equipping a thick cleaning apron.

After his graduation, Aleist was appointed as a lieutenant in the defenders. But when he resolved himself and asked what his work was, the mission he was handed was 'cleaning duty'.

It wasn't as if he wanted a large job, or that he particularly wanted to work as a knight.

Simply...

"I really think this should be left to the cleaning ladies."

"Captain, I've heard that complaint five times today."

The one who returned a cold response was Millia, stationed to the same unit. She had been invited by Fina as bait to lure Aleist in, so naturally, she was stationed in the same platoon.

But the distance between the two hadn't closed in at all.

"Well, well, the captain does have a point."

"That's right, don't be so stiff. You'll never get a boyfriend like that."

Their cleaning had been wrapped up, and after writing a log, they only had to return home. But Aleist's fatigue was great.

The platoon he was stationed to was made of members gathered for Aleist's sake.

(That princess definitely hates me.)

But Aleist felt some malice in his station. After Millia applied for the defenders, he heard a sweet tale from Fina. That if he came to the defenders, he would be a lieutenant, and Millia his deputy officer...

But how did it turn out?

All the members stationed under him were fair female knights. To take it a step further, among them, two of the women were romance target characters.

Even when he was being careful, the events splendidly broke out. Day after day, they approached Aleist in a way even he could understand.

What's more, in front of Millia.

"U-um... do you want to go drinking after this? We'll be busy the day after

tomorrow, so today's the last day we'll have time."

"You serious!? I'm going!"

"Oh, so Aleist-kun's invited me out."

The two of them instantly approved, but Millia was making a sullen face.

Wanting to invite Millia, Aleist was just about to try persuading her when an acquaintance passed down the hallway.

It was Izumi.



As Izumi walked down the corridor on her way home, she happened on Aleist desperately inviting Millia out.

From her eyes, she could only see it as him trying to flirt with her while taking two other girls along. He really was doing just that.

"Aleist, are you at it again?"

As Izumi made a fed-up expression, Aleist frantically tried to correct the misunderstanding.

"That's wrong! I just wanted to go out drinking with everyone from the platoon... not that I have everyone with me right now."

While Izumi was currently doing paperwork, she was a knight in service to the palace. She was an elite high knight, and with quite a few amiable relations from the academy, she did hear the stories going around.

That the members that made up Aleist's harem had grown by two in number...

"I do get the feeling you're lacking in fidelity."

"I'm telling you, it's a misunderstanding!"

Aleist insisted it was a misunderstanding, but looking at the result along, he couldn't quite say it was. From how Izumi saw it, the two besides Izumi were quite heated over Aleist.

With his superior looks and earnings, as long as you ignored his insides, Aleist was a fine piece of work. She understood why women might want to gather,

and Izumi didn't feel like cautioning him on it.

But his invitation of Millia who kept on rejecting looked just a little forceful.

"Ah, then how about it! Do you want to come too, Izumi-san? There's this shop that's quite famous in the capital."

Often encountering one another in the capital, the two were already on a first-name basis.

She looked at Millia to find she was making a tired expression.

Hearing both sides of the story from Aleist and Millia, Izumi held some conflicted emotions. In order to approach Aleist, the elf village that knew of Millia's present situation had moved to forcefully have her engaged.

But it was here that Lilim's matter brought forth an influence.

In the past, the one Lilim was engaged to was the son of the village chief. Lilim was betrayed by that son, so at least Millia should be able to decide by her own choice, her parents were taking on an obstinate stance.

Millia had no mind to marry, let alone go out with Aleist.

But Aleist showed a strong fixation on her. It was quite a luxury when he already had a harem. That's what she thought at first.

But Aleist had his position as the black knight.

While if he was on cleaning duty right now, it wouldn't be strange for him to become a leader of Courtois, or perhaps even king. The fact that the higher-ups would put such an individual on cleaning duty surprised Izumi.

She got the impression in the palace that those up top were troubled over how to deal with him, that they were still arguing.

"Hah, got it. Then I'll tag along. How about you, Millia?"

"... Fine."

With Aleist's desperate expression and Izumi folding in, Millia accepted the invitation.

Chapter 108: Cleaning Duty and the Bar

The unveiling display two days away, the main street of the capital was lively.

The newbie dragoons walked boldly down that rowdy main street. They didn't particularly intend to put on air, but they were elites, and the dragoons recognized as the heroes of the country.

Showing humility and servility was also a problem.

Within that group, Rudel was in high spirits. Saas, who often spoke to him in the brigade, grew curious and ended up asking.

"You're in quite a good mood, Rudel. Since the vice-captain called you out to remove you from the formation, I thought you'd be down."

Saas was a man with sharp eyes and a bad mouth on him. But among their colleagues, he was the closest to Rudel. Despite the hatred that occasionally escaped his mouth, he was a man who worried for his comrades, in the past half year they spent together, Rudel had noticed it.

"You can tell? The truth is, it looks like the flight formation matter will work itself out. We can't do any acrobatics, but I'm sure you'll be surprised."

Recalling his conversation with Mystith, Rudel smiled. His surrounding colleagues, Saas included, seemed relieved to see a satisfied Rudel.

His dragon had run away once, and they had been worried she would run away again.

Gathering the eyes of the people-especially the men-passing by on the main street, Enora walked beside Rudel. Ever since their dragoon dogfight, she began to treat him like a good friend. She would often invite him out for lunch on their days off, and the distance between them was definitely closing in.

Such an Enora was a tad bothered by the ruckus of the main road.

"What's wrong, Enora? Do you dislike a festive air?"

As Rudel directed his eyes at Enora, his other colleagues' eyes gathered on her as well. For better or worse, Rudel had become something of a leader to the

new recruits.

This was probably related to his partner Sakuya's official rule over the dragon stables.

Rather than the other eyes, receiving a look from Rudel caused Enora to deny it in a bit of a panic.

"I don't particularly hate it, but when it gets to this level, entering a store will be dreadful. They're all fully occupied by the new knight recruits from all over the place."

Enora said, as she directed her eyes to a nearby shop. Sure enough, the pub-ish shops facing the main road had been conquered by droves of knight-ish young knights. It wasn't particularly a bad thing. Around this time of year in the royal capital, one could call this scenery a harbinger of the season.

But the dragoons couldn't drink tomorrow. A brigade regulation... or rather, it was an order from Oldart.

'When I can't play around, to hell with the new recruits having fun on their own. I'm banning all alcohol on the day before the expo!'

The new recruits couldn't tell whether he was joking or serious. But it definitely was bad for the dragoons to be hungover during an important display. They accepted that.

"It looks like most of the shops that serve alcohol are full."

Rudel muttered as he looked over the knights happily drinking, when Luxheidt made a proposal. When it came to these matters, Luxheidt was the most reliable of his colleagues.

Enora knew a few famous stores in the capital, but when it came to bars, that was outside her area of expertise.

"I thought this might happen! I took the liberty of hearing this and that from our superiors."

"As expected of our Brahms and Liszt head."

"Eh? That's what I'm head of? I thought I was on the general planning committee."

As Luxheidt returned a joke to Saas' cynicism, everyone smiled. Seeing those newbie dragoons, the surrounding passersby seemed perplexed.

"That aside, they're always crowded around this time. From what I heard, it seems we're best off going to a high-class shop. They have good service to start with, and they're rarely filled up., they say."

The drunk knights of the outskirts often picked fights with the elite dragoons. It felt idiotic to have to waste time every time, so he recommended a store with relatively nice goods.

"If it's too expensive..."

While Saas seemed reluctant, Luxheidt explained away.

"A dragoon can't quite go to a cheap place, right? From time to time, it's important to go to a place befitting your status. And look, our salary is nothing to laugh out."

Right, a dragoon's salary was truly high. Rudel didn't really pay it any mind, but to those from knight-class families, nobles in name alone, like Saas and Luxheidt, it was an unbelievable sum.

"No, I get that."

Rudel looked over Saas' reluctance with a smile. With his large family, Saas was sending most of his money home. In contrast, Luxheidt was in a position where he didn't have to pay mind to those sorts of things.

"Let's listen to Luxheidt here. Lest we spend precious time searching for a shop."

As Rudel directed them towards Luxheidt's opinion, everyone accepted and started off towards a famous high-class pub.



Before the unveiling in two days' time, Cattleya had dropped by her superior Lilim.

Originally, she wanted to submit a report before taking the new recruits off drinking. But Lilim stopped her with a smile that wouldn't take no for an answer.

Cattleya's platoon was a part of Lilim's company, and she couldn't go against her orders. More than that, Lilim still held a grudge over having the responsibility of Rudel's case shoved onto her.

In an office those of Major rank could use, Cattleya was helping out with paperwork. She accepted the fact she had foisted off the responsibility, and felt sorry about it. But her dissatisfaction escaped her mouth.

"Aah, I was planning to go drinking, you know."

Every time Cattleya finished up a form, a complaint would come out of her mouth. Lilim was silently completing more than double the amount of papers. Finally reaching the end of her patience, Lilim warned her.

"Cattleya, could you give it a rest already? You understand that a majority of these documents are a result of the responsibility you had me take, right?"

Lilim opened her eyelids, faintly showing her pitch black eyes.

"Is that so? But in the end, the vice-captain took responsibility, right? Then shouldn't that be the end of it?"

"... Right. In the end, the vice-captain did indeed take responsibility. But the work you pushed onto me didn't go away!"

"Taking responsibility is the responsibility of the one responsible, Major."

To Cattleya's attitude as she closed up that conversation and picked up her next form, Lilim gripped her shaking fist. If she was up to it, Cattleya was capable of work. More than that, she was able to complete paperwork on Lilim's level.

She just didn't, which made it all the worse.

... Once the forms were done with, Lilim poured Cattleya some tea. She felt it would be too awkward to just drive her away like that. The topic of conversation turned to the new recruits.

"So do we have any promising kids?"

"... Four of them, I guess. Well, two go without saying, and the other two give off a real ruffian feel. A rebellious one and a light one, I guess."

As she thought over the two of them, Cattleya recalled Oldarts face. Their captain Oldart, if Cattleya had her say, was a ruffian as well.

“I see, so it looks like four will be able to add to our main force.”

Lilim muttered as she drank the tea she put out. Unlike Cattleya, she was a long-lived elf. Of course, that held an advantage of having a long period over which she could work. The core of the dragoon brigade had high hopes for her.

While the two of them carried out a serious conversation, when the topic of Enora came out, Cattleya suddenly started complaining.

“More importantly, that Enora girl! That breast monster, lately she’s been on the attack when it comes to Rudel, she keeps trying to make a pink air. It’s irritating. Just the other day, she clung onto him, you know.”

“... That really is a problem. Yes, she’s disrupting the public morals of the brigade.”

“Exactly! Whenever she clings onto Rudel, the vice-captain’s mood goes hell.”

“Come to think of it, he was a bit angry when he came to the capital a few days ago.”

“Ah, that one was different. It seems even he got irritated with Rudel not noticing Enora’s feelings.”

“Some things never change.

While Lilim’s tone was worn, Cattleya didn’t overlook it. For just a moment, Lilim had made a delightful expression.



As Rudel and the dragoons entered the shop, luckily enough, there were open seats.

What’s more, some familiar faces were conveniently gathered. The ones he had spent his academy life with, Luecke, Eunius, Aleist and Millia. Even Izumi was there.

“What’s this, so you all came as well.”

While Rudel secured a seat with a smile, the surrounding air was truly heavy.

The other tables were happily conversing, but around the area Rudel had taken his seat, there was little talk going on. No, it seems Rudel's arrival began the conversation.

"Been a while."

"Yo."

"Ah, Rudel."

"Pleasure"

Catching sight of Izumi, Rudel was relieved to see her pulling off the stylish high knight uniform. While she gave off a more mature air than she had half a year ago, he was relieved to see she had barely changed.

"Rudel, it's been a while. Have you been well?"

"Yeah, Sakuya's doing well too."

"I see, that's good."

Hearing their conversation, Enora sat beside Rudel. Rudel didn't seem to mind, and he was just about to introduce Enora when Luxheidt whispered into his ear.

"Hey, what's with these members? And what's this heavy air?"

Hearing that, he looked around for the first time. Sure enough, Luecke and Eunius weren't talking. Their followers seemed to have undergone a complete change after moving from the academy to the workforce. In the past, they had all eaten at the same table, and Rudel did feel something was off.

"Luecke, Eunius, what's wrong?"

As Rudel called out to the two of them, the knights around Eunius directed sharp looks. But once they noticed Rudel's party was a party of dragoons, their eyes suddenly swam around the room.

The two of them said it was nothing, and the conversation was cut off once more.

An atmosphere different from that around ruled the area. But the one who could no longer endure it was Aleist

"H-hey, Rudel."

“You look well... or not. Aleist, what’s wrong? You look worn.”

Aleist’s expression felt as if he was forcing himself to smile. Seeing his table, there was quite a biased male-to-female ratio. Luecke and Eunius’ table were nothing but men, while Rudel had two women at his.

But only Aleist’s place had a single man surrounded by eight women, a clearly florid scene.

“Well, this and that. Ahaha.”

Aleist gave a bitter smile, but there were quite a few unfamiliar faces at his table. Rudel called out to Luxheidt sitting to his side. When it came to these sorts of things, his colleagues recognized Luxheidt as the one most knowledgeable on these matters.

“How does that table look to you?”

“Eh~? I’m meeting them for the first time, so I don’t know anything. But let’s see, it seems strangely tense. That black haired girl was probably just dragged into the mess? Besides her and that elf girl, are the others all the guy’s girlfriends? But it feels like the guy’s going after the elf. I think that about sums it up.”

“I see, so Aleist increased his number of girlfriends again. This is a problem.”

“That’s right. Though I also think not noticing is a problem as well.”

“You think?”

As Rudel failed to grasp Luxheidt’s words, he looked over at Aleist’s table. Aleist was definitely surrounded by women. It was a familiar scene from the academy. But here as well, his member had undergone a complete change.

Surely they weren’t all his girlfriends, and he was supposed to already have five fiancés. Won’t anymore be a bit too harsh, or so Rudel worried. It was Aleist’s problem, so thinking it wasn’t his place to stick in his mouth, he tried to call over.

It was there that, like Aleist, those unable to endure came out.

From Eunius’ table, a few young knights called over to Aleist’s table.

“Hey, girls of the defenders, how about you entertain us as well.”

“Our Eunius-sama over here is the heir of an archduke house, you know.”

“You could at least pour him a drink.”

Looking at Eunius’ expression, he was truly displeased. It seems these were followers who didn’t understand Eunius’ feelings.

“You lot...”

Eunius was about to stop his followers. But his voice was interrupted by Luecke.

“Good grief, this is why the Diade faction is so troublesome.”

While eyes gathered on Luecke at once, the man in question continued eating as if nothing had happened. In contrast, Luecke’s followers were growing panicked.

“Hah, they did it again.”

From how Aleist held his head in anguish, this had likely happened a number of times before they had come in. Rudel sent a glance at Izumi and she shook her head.

“It’s been like this every time they open their mouths. It’s troublesome how they keep angering Millia.”

“I’m not angry.”

From how she immediately interrupted Izumi, Rudel understood Millia had something to say on the matter. But this time was something different from before.

“Tsk, what an ungrateful bunch.”

“They’re the sort that take along a demi-human and a foreign girl. It’s our fault for getting our hopes up.”

“Sure enough. One’s tastes speaks volumes to their character.”

Such laughs broke out at Eunius’ table. Just as Rudel stood, Aleist stood as well. Enora and Luxheidt swiftly grabbed Rudel’s arm, but it seems Aleist’s table was too late.

Aleist headed off for Eunius’ table and glared at the folks who were laughing.

Perhaps the surroundings sensed the dangerous air as the shop itself returned to silence.

Chapter 109: The Bar and the Fight

In a pub that gave off a dampened air, tensions suddenly surged as Aleist stood to face Eunius' table.

More than himself being mocked, he couldn't forgive the fact they looked down on Millia as a demi-human. While those around Rudel instantly stopped him, the women from the defenders were unable to do the same for Aleist.

He glared at the knights who flocked around Eunius, and the one who said it stood, a grin on his face.

Aleist was the black knight, the eldest son of the Hardie Count House. Even that title, before an archduke was overshadowed. No matter how important the black knight was to the country, his role in the palace was cleaning duty. It was surely only natural that the knights made light of Aleist. Even if they heard tales of his strength, they had never seen it in person.

Humans had a tendency to lend an eye only to what was most convenient.

The laughing knight was tall in stature, over a head above Aleist. When Aleist glared at him, he trembled in a joking manner.

"Oh, how scary. Our little black knight is angry."

"You lot better take back those words."

Rudel watched as Aleist ignored his foe's reactions, closing in and telling them to take back their remark. He decided to leave it to Aleist. Seeing through the enemy's strength, he saw that two people weren't necessary. But his eyes drifted to Eunius. While Eunius directed fed-up eyes to his followers, he didn't give off the same intensity he had at the academy. He held an expression somewhat close to resignation.

"Hah, don't push your luck, newbie. No matter how strong you say you were at the academy, we're official knights here. We're in a different class from your petty games."

"Class? You definitely do seem low-class."

Receiving that provocation, a few more knights stood to take on his offer. Unable to watch any further, Eunius breathed out a sigh as he apologized.

“My bad, Aleist. You lot sit down. We have an important expo the day after tomorrow. I don’t want any trouble.”

“S-sorry.”

Before the knights who took their seats, Aleist was still unsatisfied, Grabbing the lapels of the knight who provoked him, he forcefully lifted him to his feet.

“That’s all well and good, now apologize. Eunius’ apology and your statement are a separate matter!”

His lapels grasped, the knight’s face turned red as he gripped his fist. There, the defender female knights finally stepped in to stop Aleist. Millia seemed unmotivated, while she had stood, she just watched without holding him back.

“... You’re being a bother. Sit down.”

“Eh? ... Okay.’

Seeing Aleist dejectedly step down on Millia’s words, those around put their best efforts into containing their laughter. From the surrounding seats, small stifled laughs escaped, and some even had their shoulders shaking.

Though the air surrounding Eunius and Luecke, and those around them was something else.



“Even so, it sure is quiet.”

Rudel reached a hand for the food and ale brought to the table as he spoke.

Luxheidt put in an order for some extra ale from the waiter who brought their food as he cheerfully answered Rudel’s doubts.

“Of course, when we have three archdukes, plus some followers from their factions, it’s going to be tense. The only ones who’d dare make a ruckus in this heavy air are our little Enora in love, and that black knight over there.”

While it didn’t sound like the sort of thing anyone’d laugh over, Luxheidt was also a dragoon. He had gone through his share of experiences, and obtained a

dragon. It was natural for him to be able to stay calm.

Rudel looked at Aleist's table, seeing a situation where Aleist wanted to talk to Millia, but everyone around kept getting in the way.

Looking at Izumi, she simply ate her meal with the knife and fork she was once so terrible at using. When he thought nothing had changed, Rudel notices those around him were beginning to change, little by little. But more than that, Rudel showed some interest in Luxheidt's statement. He had also gained some bonds with his comrades, and perhaps he had changed as well, he thought...

"Love? Enora has someone she likes?"

"Hey! ... It seems the alcohol has reached Aiguille-san's tongue."

While Enora was caught off-guard by Rudel's sudden statement, she instantly smiled and gazed at Luxheidt. It was here that Rudel made a misunderstanding.

"What's this? So the two of you were dating?"

"Wow, even I'm taken aback. I never would have thought you could look at that smile on Enora's face and come out with those words. Rudel, look a little closer... her eyes aren't smiling, right?"

Hearing that from Luxheidt, Rudel looked back at Enora to find her gazing at him intently with upturned eyes, her face a little red. He thought it was a little early for her to be drunk, but he managed to understand the two of them were not going out.

"Oy, Luxheidt. It doesn't look like Rudel gets it."

Even Rudel had to deny that one.

"How rude. I understand now that those two aren't going out."

Rudel was certain that he understood what Saas was trying to say, and both Saas and Luxheidt sighed. Seeing the two of them, their other comrades laughed.

"Hah, it's scary to see how a woman can change. Anyways, Rudel, how's that black knight over there? Is he as creepy a guy as he looks?"

Luxheidt looked tiredly at Enora. And after turning his eyes towards Aleist, he

asked Rudel about his nature.

“You’re interested? He’s a little strange, but he’s a good person. From what I know, he had five fiancés, but... looks like it’s on the rise.”

“For real? Just what sort of oddball does he have to be for you to call him strange?”

“Saas, I get the feeling you’re making fun of me.”

When Saas sent a truly surprised look at Aleist, the other dragoons looked at him as well. They were curious just what sort of oddball he had to be for even Rudel to think he was a strange person.

... But if they made a ruckus in that quieted-down store, then naturally, the other party would hear it as well. On top of that, receiving pitiful eyes from all the dragoons, even Aleist would notice.

“Hold it! I don’t want to be called strange by you, Rudel! I haven’t destroyed any training grounds or facilities!”

To a teary-eyed Aleist, a voice came from an unexpected place.

It was Luecke.

“Oh, now that’s quite an intriguing statement, Aleist. From what I can tell, a sum far exceeding the annual budget has been wasted on the defenders.”

Resting both his elbows on the table, Luecke folded his hands to cover his mouth as he glared at Aleist. For some reason, his follower civil officials also sent some bitter expressions at the defenders.

“N-no, I mean, I haven’t broken anything, you know? And it’s not like I have any say in our budget or anything.”

“I agree that Rudel is also a problem, but several tens of times the funds required to fix the broken training grounds and buildings are moving around. You really should think a bit about funding. You don’t want to be seen as the same as some muscle heads who come under the misconception that money is an inexhaustible resource, right?”

“S-sorry, and wait... I do treasure the tools I use for cleaning, and I’m economizing as much as I can with detergent...”

Aleist's touching efforts, before the outrageous sum moving around fell short of even chickens feed. But it was better than doing nothing, Rudel nodded in honest admiration.

"... no, Rudel? You really should repent."

Saas cautioned a nodding Rudel, but his statement was cut off halfway. Smashing his glass, a knight stood to his feet to glare at the civil officials. It seemed Eunius had no intent to stop them this time as he left it be.

"And who could these muscle heads be? I'm sure you'd be happy to tell us, beansprouts."

The knight who stood had a hand on his weapon. The pub instantly regressed to its original tense state. There were some who had already finished paying to retreat, it was a right bother to the store.

"What's this? Isn't it precisely because you're aware of it that you're so irritated? This must be a show of the caliber of your owner."

Luecke downed the contents of his glass, quietly placing it on the table. When his eyes met Eunius', Eunius violently slammed his glass down, shattering it. Both sides exchanged a glare, and naturally, their surroundings reacted as well. But the officials were looking around, their eyes pleading for help.

"You two, why don't you call it quits? The expo's in two days."

Receiving those pleading eyes, Rudel remonstrated them. But with a bit of drink in them, the two of them didn't seem to have their usual level-headedness.

"Hah? Shut it Rudel. He's the one who picked the fight. Then it would be rude if I didn't take him up on that. To pick a fight you know you're going to lose, you sure are a strange one."

As Eunius stood and gripped his sword, Luecke gave a scornful laugh.

"Fight? It seems you still don't understand. If you still think everything can be settled with violence like in our student days, then you really are unsalvageable idiots. You're better off shoved in the dungeon. No, it's your jobs that should be locked away. This'll be a good laugh."

With Luecke's words as the trigger, Eunius' men picked up their weapons and kicked the table down. As a high knight, Izumi stepped between them to mediate.

"Give it a rest already. I must ask you to refrain from making a ruckus before the unveiling."

Just like in their student days, Eunius and Luecke of them stopped in their tracks on Izumi's arbitration, but they were the only ones who did.

"Shut your mouth, a mere foreign woman thinks she can stand before us!?"

"Wha!"

Eunius' follower thrust at Izumi. In the next instant, Rudel had smacked the knight who thrust at Izumi. It happened in a flash. While the knights thought there had been a bit of distance between them, Rudel ignored that fact, closing the distance in an instant to punch and knock that knight out.

"... You've got some nerve. If you want to fight so badly, then I'll be your opponent. Everyone let's take this outside."

Rudel sent a glance to both Luecke and Eunius, and picking up on something, the two of them smiled a bit.

But seeing his serious eyes, the follower knights directed a glance to Eunius. They were hesitant to pick a fight with a dragoon.

... But.

"It's too late to go weak at the knees. But this ain't bad... it's been a while since I've gone on a rampage. You lot, you're all going outside. You picked a fight, so it's only natural, right?"

Eunius gave the order to his followers. He wouldn't let them run away.

"Hmm, for such a meritocratic bunch, it doesn't sound bad at all for a civil official to shut them up. Everyone who wants to join in, go outside. And when we're up against those guys, don't expect me to protect you. If you're taking part, you have to fend for yourselves."

Saying they could take part if they wanted to Luecke rolled his shoulders to show his will to fight. Within all that, Aleist of the defenders was the only one

who tried to stop those three.

“What are you thinking!? Do you understand we’re in an important period? Quit fighting like a student, let’s calm down a bit!”

While he had stood to stop the three of them, Rudel and Eunius silently placed their hands on Aleist’s shoulders to lead him outside, Dragged along, Aleist’s expression showed he had no idea what they were angry about.

“Eh? W-what? What is this?”

To Aleist’s confusion, an empty-handed Luecke tossed some unreasonable words.

“No you see... I was a bit jealous, seeing you surrounded by women. I’m going to take out some of my anger.”

“What’s with that!? When I’m not happy about it at all, forcefully dragging me off is way too unfair!”

“It really is unfair. I know that. And since I know that, I’ll just say it. You’re participating whether you like it or not.”

As Luecke explained something he wasn’t even thinking to Aleist, the four of them went outside. With a late start, the follower knights and civil officials left the store as well.



Seeing Rudel off, Luxheidt finished the remaining food before emptying his glass.

“H-hey! You’re going to leave them!?”

The sharp-eyed, often sarcastic Saas seemed worried for Rudel. Enora looked like she would bound off at any moment, but perhaps she wanted to ask Izumi about her relationship with Rudel as she was fidgeting.

Luxheidt smiled as he told the waiter to get the person in charge. A little while later, the owner of the shop frantically raced over to Luxheidt.

“W-was there any problem on our part?”

While they were the ones who caused the problem, the owner was unable to

go against the dragoons, the heroes of the country, so he gave an apology.

“No, no, that should be our line. We really are sort. Send the repair fees and trouble fees around to a mister Rudel Arses. Ah, also, we’ll also foot the bill for the other tables... everyone went outside, after all.”

Right, the women of the defenders had left Izumi and Millia to give chase to Aleist. They would likely return later, but that would be trouble for the shop. Those who owed money should pay. But saying it was Rudel’s responsibility for causing a problem this time, Luxheidt pushed the payment onto Rudel.

“... That’s a big help.”

As the owner said his thanks, Luxheidt handed over a simple memo. Accepting it, the owner left at once.

“How’s that going to work out for you?”

“The payment? It’ll be fine, I plan to sell him a favor. Now then, it’s right about time for us to go watch the fight.”

Urging on a worried Saas, Luxheidt dragged a nervous Enora out of the store. So love really can change a person, he thought as he looked at her.

Chapter 110: The Fight and Friends

In front of Aleist's eyes, a large man was sent flying to the side.

No, perhaps it was more accurate to say he was blown away. Rudel and Eunius exchanged fists nearby, while a little further away, Luecke used his magic to blow away the knights that swarmed around him. The civil officials who tried to capture Eunius were thrown and littered about the streets like garbage.

At the surrounding disaster, Aleist's face went pale. He instantly sobered up.

"Yep! This looks bad. This is definitely bad, Rudel!"

The two locking fists wouldn't lend an ear to his cry. On the contrary, despite the unveiling the day after the next, the two of them were punching each other in the face. When the others were carefully punching away from the face, the two of them laughed as they blatantly took aim.

Just as they had been in the academy, they were serious. The form of them seriously enjoying that exchange of blows caused Aleist to draw back.

"I'm telling you to stop it! You aren't kids anymore."

"Aleist, what makes you think you can stay an onlooker?"

"Eh?"

When Aleist tried to stop the two of them, Luecke placed a hand on his shoulders. As he turned, Luecke began to scold him, a frigid smile floating over his face.

"You... no. The defenders really have been a thorn in my side. The overtime I go through every day, and the mountains of paperwork, they're all because of the defenders. Did you know? Who do you think prepares all the budget you guys run through like water? And who do you think checks over the documentation?"

"I haven't the slightest."

Aleist was a lieutenant, but he generally didn't attend meetings. No, he

wasn't invited to them. He simply worked at the palace on cleaning duty. That was all.

When he was suddenly brought into talks of funding there was no way he could answer.

"It's me. It's my duty to process it! Even so, it's my job. If it's a necessity, I won't complain. But you see... the quantity and details of the papers surrounding you guys is abnormal!"

Aleist could hear a grating sound from the shoulder Luecke grasped. HE was definitely angry. Definitely enraged. Not wanting to take on Luecke when he was like that, he tried to laugh and play it off, when...

"Do you know about the magic called earth hand?"

As Luecke snapped his fingers, the dirt behind him swelled into the shape of a gripped fist. The size of that fist was as large as a grown man.

"W-what do you plan to do with that?"

"Isn't it obvious? You use your shadows, so I'll be using magic. I'm not suited to duking it out like those guys."

Aleist's eyes turned to Rudel, confirming the form of the two rampaging about, destroying everything around them.

Looking back at Luecke, Aleist broke into a cold sweat at the earth hands that had multiplied in number while he wasn't looking.

"Now why don't we start."

"This is way too unreasonable!"



Around that time, the culprit behind Luecke's anger, Fina, was processing paperwork in her private room at the palace.

"Hah, this is for the sake of the country... I cannot be negligent (I'll pass this proposal and augment our budget! Just you wait, Halbades! I'll show you a thing or two about how this works. Hihyaaaah!)"

"Princess, please stop with the lies. A majority of these documents pertain to

demi-humans, correct? What's with this special facility? The budget's become something incredible."

"Fluff fluff land."

"..."

"For the sake of my dreams of fluffadise, I must first start with a house of fluff."

Sophina's face was stiff as she looked at Fina, who didn't have anyone to stop her lately. She had worked too hard, transcending her fatigue and ending up in a state of high tensions. Naturally as it was, once the individual calmed down, she would surely come to regret it.

The current Courtois didn't have the budget to send around to such things. But through her needless proficiency, her papers were able to skillfully draw funding from the country. Meaning the official documents made it all the way to the top brass. They would likely be torn up there, but it was no joke for the government officials who had to deal with it along the way.

At this point, Luecke's sending back of the documents had become Fina's motivation. Luecke's overly serious personality had backfired.

"I'll call my master to fluff fluff land, and spend my days by his side gazing at fluffies being fluffed! I'm saying goodbye to this life of paperwork!"

"Get a grip on yourself! Why are you trying so far? When you're usually so useless!"

"... Sophina. You just called me useless, did you. I now understand how you see me on a regular basis."

Seeing Fina suddenly turn serious, Sophina flinched.

After staring expressionlessly at Sophina, Fina turned to her desk and restarted her work. Atop the desk, there were a number of serious documents scattered about. A report on the border was one of them.

(Well I'm beat. The movements of the knight brigades stationed on the border are worse than I thought. They're not even particularly incompetent, so why are...)

She seriously considered anti-empire measures and moved some hands around, but it seems she had lost the initiative.

While she had sent around members of the defenders as well, but even so, if you asked whether they were enough to maintain the border, that would be impossible. A number of choices encroached on Fina. Within all that, what would become her trump card would have to be the dragoons. From the founding of the nation, they had protected the kingdom.

(They're too skilled. We'll eventually have to pay the bill for relying on them too much. Even if we overcome this situation, it'll be bad if we don't have some reforms.)

As she troubled her head over the dragoons, Fina remembered Rudel. In preparation for the expo in two days time, the members of each knight brigade were probably making a ruckus right around now.

"I'm sure it's rowdy outside."

On Fina's words, Sophina hurriedly gave a response.

"I-It happens every year. We'll have to spend tomorrow repairing the destruction."

At the expo that could be called Courtois' specialty, the young knights would run rampant every year. It was also a sort of stress relief. You could say that area was sponsored.

"It's an annual event. If the fountain isn't destroyed, you can't say it's that time of year."

"The area around the fountain on the main road is the perfect place for a fight, after all."

Perhaps recalling her time as a new recruit, Sophina gave a nostalgic nod. There was no problem about the exchange of blows between knight brigades.

If it was on the level of a scuffle, they would often be condoned. It was a part of the festival. A part of the festive eve.

Fina wondered if Rudel was also raising a ruckus right around not. That didn't sound bad, thought she as she looked at the desk. For Fina knew now was the

only time he could play around.



The four out of breath fled from the plaza surrounding the fountain.

As knights protecting the capital came in droves, Luxheidt and the others bought them some time. But Eunius and Luecke's followers were apprehended, unable to run away. Rudel had hopes that Luxheidt would manage to do something about that as well.

"W-why are we running? Just own up."

While Aleist gave a short-winded lament, the other three laughed. Rudel gave his first grand laugh he had given in a long time. The four of them hadn't changed. They were the same sort of idiots they had been in their school days.

"No, couldn't help it."

Eunius rubbed the place Rudel had smacked him as he laughed. Rudel had cut the inside of his mouth, blood dripped from the corner of his lips. As he wiped that, Luecke began to speak.

"Now then, what are we going to do now?"

"Let's get a drink. It won't be any fun if we broke up here."

On their exchange, Aleist recalled their followers.

"Huh? What about your men?"

"I'm sure they'll be released in no time. That's just the sort of day it is."

"Once they're shoved in a cell, even those lot will quiet down a bit, right? Oh right! I can use that as a reason to increase their training hours. My body's aching to move around."

On their light correspondence, Rudel recalled his own comrades. Luxheidt, Saas, and Enora would likely be fine without him.

And he thought over Izumi, but he couldn't turn back to invite her now. If he showed himself, he would be apprehended.

"Then we have to find a store that'll take us."

Rudel proceeded down the depths of an alley, and following behind him, the other three walked. Being in an alley, Aleist walked mindfull of his surroundings. From behind, they could hear the clamor of the main street.



“Oy, was that really alright?”

Leaving the fallen to the knights charged with security, Luxheidt had freed his company. Saas seemed worried about letting Rudel run away and pushing their job onto the other knights.

But Luxheidt laughed.

“It’s fine. Rather, I already told them who the principal offenders were.”

“You sold Rudel out?”

Enora scowled at him, so he said that was an overstatement and brought seriousness to his face.

“The culprits are the three lords and that black knight, right? It’ll be more troublesome for them to actually arrest them, and as punishment, the four are going to help with the cleanup tomorrow. This is for the best. I’m sure they’ll be delighted, being given a legit reason to avoid some troublesome work.”

“You really see it going down that well?”

Saas glared at him, so Luxheidt shrugged his shoulders. He didn’t particularly get the feeling he handled things perfectly. He hadn’t stopped Rude. If he did, it wouldn’t have come to this.

Even so, Luxheidt had his own reasons for not stopping Rudel.

“Well, I just have to do better next time.”

“So I hope.”

On Saas’ words, Luxheidt gave a bitter smile.

He was looking at his colleagues in his own way; while Saas had a sharp look in his eyes, he worried for his comrades. Enora was engrossed with Rudel, but lately, she had lost her tension, and let the power leave her shoulders. She had talent from the start. He recognized her abilities.

Whenever he looked at Rudel, he found himself amused.

He felt he was looking forward to whatever he would do. While he was a person unsuited for organizations, that being the case, he would draw people to him.

(Is this how a hero is supposed to be? Well, if that's how it's going to be, it sure is lucky to have a hero among your colleagues.)

Seeing Luxheidt chuckle, both Saas and Enora, and the other dragoons found it creepy.



Right as they exited the alley they found themselves at a stall near the river.

Rudel and the others walked over to it and took their seats at the provisional chairs outside the stall. The table wasn't fixed, it wouldn't stop wobbling.

The sound of flowing water and the exchanges of the surrounding customers rung comfortably against their ears. While they were covered in wounds, their clothes in tatters, the stallkeeper accepted them with a smile.

Eunius handed over some money and told them to bring out whatever. In no time, the table was lined with snacks and ale. The plates were cheap, and the ale wasn't anything high class, but the four of them raised their glasses on the spot.

Aleist alone seemed vaguely displeased. Seeing his expression, Eunius pat him on the shoulder and laughed.

"What's up? You look down, Aleist."

Luecke munched on the potatoes put out as a snack, and perhaps they were surprisingly tasty, as he continued reaching out for them. And with Eunius leading in, he tried consoling Aleist.

"Are you mindful of what happened back there? I'll forget about it, so why don't you have a bite too? These fried potatoes are splendid."

"No, I'm not angry or anything. How should I put it, I don't hate this sort of thing. It's just, I'm on cleaning duty, and I'm anxious about what's to come, or rather..."

It seemed Aleist had his worries. Rudel recalled Aleist's expression as he saw it in the high-class shop. It didn't quite look that he was living a fulfilled life. Though he knew that he was troubled, being surrounded by women.

"Are you worried? Then it'll be easier to talk about it."

"It's that, right? Millia, right? The rumor's been going around the palace."

Eunius bit off some meat from a skewer, telling Rudel Aleist's rumor in the palace.

In the first place, while being a lieutenant of the defenders, he was surrounded by female knights. What's more, they were all beauties. It was natural for male knights to resent him. Yet such a man was in love with the female elf knight called Millia. And the target of his affections wasn't giving him the time of day.

"You know, when you already have five fiancés, there are even talks of getting the princess with you as well. That's why you're so hated."

"Five mistresses is a bit much, don't you think. Rudel, could you pass that fish over there."

Luecke asked Rudel to hand over the fish he hadn't tried yet. Rudel cleaned up the empty plates as he handed Luecke the plate of fish.

"This one? Well, I think it's too much as well."

The three of them warned Aleist about his engagements, but to them, Aleist dropped an even bigger bomb.

"... Seven."

"... Hah?"

While he was drinking his ale, on Aleist's murmur, Eunius ended up spilling his cup. Luecke also dropped the food en route to his mouth.

"Aleist, if that wasn't a mistake, did I just hear seven?"

As three sets of eyes gathered, Aleist downed the contents of the cup in his hand. He cried out.

"That's right! Seven! It went up. It went up while I wasn't looking... my

parents said she was the daughter of an important business partner and took her. And after that, even a childhood friend popped out.”

Rudel looked at Luecke and tilted his head.

“Are childhood friends the sort of things that suddenly pop out?”

“No, they usually don’t suddenly pop out. Tell us more, Aleist.”

Aleist poured alcohol into his cup and sipped it as he began to speak. His eyes were already teary.

“A long while back... well, there were a few reasons, and there was a kid who moved over. Rather than moved over, she was the daughter of my old private tutor and she lived at the mansion with us.”

“I see. A common tale.”

Eunius gave an adequate response before putting in an order for extra ale. While he was surprised they had increased, it seems he had no interest in how love began. More than that, he was directing a smile at the stallkeeper’s cute daughter who came to take their order.

“No, well... that kid had this and that going on, and we got along well. But I forgot about her, or how should I put it...”

“Now that’s terrible.”

The reason Rudel could say that was because of his few encounters in life. The nobles Luecke and Eunius had plenty of places to meet people. Within all that, there were quite a few faces they had forgotten.

For Rudel, who had few encounters before he came to the academy, he felt forgetting was terrible.

Sensing his difference in temperature from those around him, Rudel inclined an ear towards Aleist’s story.

“Y-yeah. And you see, it seems we made a bit of a promise when we were little, and...”

“A verbal agreement? I can’t endorse the fact you let someone grasp your weakness.”

“You should learn to evade it a bit more.”

Luecke and Eunius pressed Aleist on his verbal agreement. That was also something that came from their special environment. And as such a mismatched conversation carried on, Aleist’s present situation came into light.

Meaning, while proclaiming he loved Millia, he had increased his number of fiancés. There were seven at the current stage. Thinking of how either Fina or Aileen might be added on, the three of them could no longer laugh it off.

Because his serious worry was an increase in his amount of engagements.

“Then just reject them.”

The words Eunius said through a laugh were the closest thing he had to an answer. His indecisiveness was the problem, Rudel agreed with that.

But Aleist understood it as well.

“I did! Rather, I flat out rejected them! But... but... one of them was a daughter of a merchant business partner, and my parents said it was for the future of their transactions, and the other side was all up for it. And when there’s a girl with a smile that says she’s waited for this moment her entire life, um, I couldn’t straight up say no, or how should I put it, my words didn’t get through at all.”

The three faces gradually grew sympathetic. There was no helping it if it was about the connections between houses, thought Rudel as he consoled Aleist. But here, Luecke changed the topic.

The three of them had noticed. Aleist had some fault in it...

So that was the end of the matter. There was nothing more for the three of them to do. They weren’t able to stick their mouths into the circumstance of other houses.

“Come to think of it, Rudel, your sister’s enrolling in the academy next year, right? ... Is Lena doing alright?”

“Lena? I heard she’s going fine. They grow up so fast.”

“I-I see. Then I want to send her something to commemorate the event. What would be nice?”

“Hey, I’m not done yet.”

Having lost interest in Aleist, Rudel and Luecke began talking about Lena’s enrollment. Eunius had started hitting on the stallkeeper’s daughter.

He was being a bit incessant, so Luecke glared at Aleist. His eyes were the epitome of seriousness.

“Can you keep quiet a bit? I’m talking about something serious here... so if I’m sending her something, would a spear be nice? I can arrange for one of the highest quality at once.”

“I think it’s a bit early for that. In that case, I something simple that fits her physique would be nice. As a brother, if possible, I’d like to do something for Erselica as well, but... Aleist, I’ll hear you out some other time.”

Rudel spoke with Luecke about his sisters as he put off Aleist’s talk to another time.



Separated from everyone, Izumi and Millia walked down a path a little away from the rowdy main road.

The voices of the knights in festive spirits reached all the way to them.

Millia and Izumi walked side by side as they made for the lodging house. The two of them stayed silent.

Perhaps being tactful, Izumi started a conversation about the events of the day.

“Today really was something. Even so, those four are the same as ever.”

Seeing Izumi’s bitter smile, Millia suddenly grew irritated. Rudel had smacked away the knight who tried to lay a hand on her. It felt as if she had been shown just how important Izumi was to Rudel.

(When I already decided to forget.)

“And Aleist is going after you as alwa—”

“Quiet! Shut up!”

“M-Millia?”

Stopping in her tracks and screaming out, Millia looked blankly into Izumi's face. With that sudden cry, Izumi's expression showed she was mindful over whether she had said something bad.

Handing her head, Millia threw out all the feelings she had been keeping silent about. Hearing her own shaking voice, she noticed she was crying.

"I'm jealous of you. The only one he'll ever look at is you, Izumi. It was the same at the academy. Always by his side. When I could only ever watch, you were always having fun with him."

She understood these weren't words to direct at Izumi. She understood, but with the alcohol in her system, she was doing a bad job at controlling her feelings.

She didn't particularly hate Aleist. But the one she came to like was Rudel. Within Millia, there remained still emotions she couldn't shake off. No matter how hard she tried to forget, it was no good. It would only remind her, inform her of how much she thought of Rudel.

And yet...

"Even now, I still like Rudel."

... And yet, I can't win against Izumi.

Understanding she couldn't win, It was the voice of Millia's heart.

Chapter 111: Friends and the Display

In the capital preparing for its expo in two days, the revelry could be heard, even on the unpopular road back to the lodging house.

The two women who met each other on that road, a green haired crying elf, and a black haired beautiful oriental woman.

She understood she would never be able to say it so bluntly. She knew it would only be trouble if she said that. To Izumi, Rudel was close to her life's savior. So she didn't want to trouble her savior Rudel.

And yet, Millia said she was jealous.

"Say something... laugh at my efforts as futile. Rudicule me! Say I'm a stupid woman! Make me give up already!!"

While Millia painfully wrung out her voice, Izumi shook her head. It was a sensation as if Millia was speaking her own feelings, causing the tears to build in Izumi's eye. Enduring the urge to cry, Izumi took a deep breath before slowly looking over Millia.

The fact she looked like a young girl trembling in her anxiety was surely because she was an elf. Raising her head, she readied herself.

"I'm the same. No, I'm even worse. I always liked him. That's why I stayed by his side. But even that was no good. I'm not good enough to stand by Rudel's side."

When she put what she understood to mouth, she felt ashamed of herself. But even so, Making a smile, Izumi spoke to Millia.

"We're similar, you and I. Falling in love with a person our hands will never reach, we're both stupid women."

"... But you're all the way up there, so far ahead of me. I don't have a single memory with him at the academy..."

"Even so, that doesn't change the result."

Izumi's tone wasn't as if she was speaking to Millia, it was as if she was telling

it to herself.



The next day...

In the plaza with the broken fountain, under Cattleya's watch, the Three Lords and Aleist were cleaning up the wreckage.

Eunius and Luecke's followers they had forcefully brought in had taken paid leave and were currently hospitalized.

"Why is it just us? There were definitely others who went on a rampage."

"My thoughts exactly. I'm no good at physical labor. Can't we leave this to the laborers?"

To the two who spilled complaints, Cattleya gave the whip in her hands one strong smack against the ground. That strike from the whip made quite a painful sound.

"Yeah, yeah, you two over there, get back to work. Otherwise, we'll never make in time for tomorrow's display (Not just this time, we haven't had idiots that destroyed it this bad in years)."

As the new recruits were placed under Cattleya, she had to take responsibility and keep watch over the four. It was decided that Cattleya was the only viable option, but truth be told, Oldart pushed the job onto her because she looked bored.

(Hah, why am I even here.)

She issued orders to the four, putting them to work, but any normal knight would be too fearful to order them around. With various things having happened in the past, it was decided Cattleya would be alright.

She looked at the two seriously doing work a little away. It was Aleist and Rudel.

"Huh? Rudel, why are you smiling like that? It's creepy."

"Yeah, you should look forward to tomorrow's display. I can't talk about it yet, but I'm sure you'll be surprised."

(What are you planning? Well, the ones who'll be troubled are that Charmer in his Prime and Mr. Straight-laced so I don't really care.)

As Cattleya let out a sigh, she got around to thinking that her amount of troubles had increased as of late. Perhaps her state had been witnessed as the four of them gathered to look at Cattleya.

"What's this? Does your superior have someone she likes? Come to think of it, she used to be your fiancé, right Rudel?"

As Eunius checked it with another dragoon, Rudel, the man in question tilted his head.

"I'm not good with those sorts of rumors, but... I don't think she does."

(... Well I'm sorry for being single. Even like this, I'm at least trying.)

With younger men gossiping over her love life, it got to her head, but Cattleya persuaded herself to endure it.

"Hmm, well, with that personality, you know. She must be troubled with no one wanting to take her. This is why boorish women are troublesome."

Aleist followed through on Luecke's cold words. As Aleist took some fleeting glances at her, Cattleya grew irritated.

"N-no, well! Appearance-wise, she's beautiful, and she's a dragoon, so that sort of thing is..."

"Well sorry for only being beautiful appearance-wise! Now get back to work already."

When she hit her whip against the ground, three of them returned to work. Eunius the manual labor, Luecke used magic to repair the broken portions. Aleist carried out miscellaneous jobs.

But Rudel...

"Lieutenant."

"What is it?"

He came over to Cattleya, and after struggling a bit over what to say, he directed her a smile. As Cattleya worried whether that smile would turn her

face red, Rudel...

“I don’t know what happened, but do your best!”

Cattleya expressionlessly approached Rudel before lightly hitting him with her whip. While Rudel’s seemed confused, she yelled out loudly.

“This is your faultttt!”

“Why!?”

Seeing Rudel’s incomprehensive face, Cattleya screamed some more.



Fritz wore the gorgeous knight uniform he had gotten accustomed to over the past half year as he paid Aileen a visit.

As captain of the royal guard, escorting Aileen was part of his duty. It was a role he was responsible, and definitely a problem to be handled, but it wasn’t as if he didn’t have any proficient subordinates he could leave it to.

Originally, guards of firm status and capability would be selected.

But it hadn’t been long since the royal guard’s creation.

To add to that, Fritz had graduated on the academy’s three-year curriculum. He had become captain without learning all the things he should. That being the case, he had problems when it came to paperwork jobs. The executives of the royal guard had circled him around to Aileen’s security.

Otherwise, on top of Aileen’s mood spiraling downwards, work wouldn’t get done. Keeping Aileen company as she sipped tea on the terrace, Fritz had begun to hold questions as of late. Was it really alright for him to be here doing this? Wasn’t there something else he should be doing?

But he had already become captain of the royal guard, and he had not the freedom.

The Kingdom of Courtois had even granted Fritz a dragon. Letting Fritz do as he pleased was an impossible request.

“What seems to be the matter? Are these sweets not to your liking... then I’ll call the bakers.”

“N-no. that isn’t the case.”

While he had gotten around to using words he wasn’t accustomed to, he was told that in private, before Aileen, he was to speak normally. From that, his manner of speech had become a mismatch. The reason for his panic was Aileen.

If she didn’t fancy them, she would instantly change out the bakers.

If it was so easy, then couldn’t he be next... the thought crossed Fritz’ mind. He had unskillfully succeeded, so he couldn’t let himself drop from his current status. The elevation of commoner living standards he wanted to carry out, put in the wrong station he wasn’t able to push it forward.

(It’s not yet the time. If I wait a bit more, I should be able to move freely.)

Smiling, sipping tea with Aileen, Fritz feared when the smile of this beautiful princess might be directed at another.

(Want. I want Aileen.)

Her blond hair was long and beautiful, her blue eyes seemed they just might suck him in.

Fritz held affection towards Aileen, who had supported him so far. It was something, looked on from the side, was a fleeting, and hazardous scene to behold.



“Father, what knight brigade is that one!?”

A small girl held an ice cream cone in her right hand as she asked her father giving her a piggy back ride about the knight brigade members marching in file.

“That’s the royal guard. There aren’t many high knights this year, so they might be the centerpiece in years to come.”

The father had lived in the capital for many years and he had watched the displays from a young age. As the years went by, he had begun to view them with the strict eyes of an examiner.

The royal guard was a hurriedly constructed brigade, and their movements couldn’t help but lack in polish.

“They aren’t moving well. I heard some high knights had transferred over, but their ranks are slightly misaligned. If that’s how they’re going to be, then while they’re lacking in numbers, the high knights are the prettier sight.”

“Ah, father, look, look! There’s a person wearing amaaazing black armor over there.”

As the girl started squirming on her father’s shoulders, ‘Don’t drop your ice cream,’ he said as he gave a wry smile.

“One of this year’s centerpieces. That’s the black knight.”

“Black knight?”

“Black full-plate armor and a red mantle... those gold horns and ornaments are lovely. He’s even riding a nightmare, he’s on a different level from the other knights.”

A nightmare was a beautiful horse monster with a long, black mane. But as it possessed intellect, it was possible to domesticate it. The sharp horn growing from its forehead and the red lines that drew a pattern as they ran around its body were a charming sight.

“Ah! There’s a dragon flying in the sky! Are is that a dragoon?”

“Hahaha, with just one dragon, I can’t say that’s a dragoon. It’s circling over the royal guard, so I’m sure that’s the captain’s dragon. But it does look lonely flying along like that. When the new recruit and veteran flight formations are the centerpiece each year.”

The royal guard passed in front of the two, followed by the new recruits of each knight brigade. The residents living in the capital looked to the sky, knowing the real show was yet to come.

“My neck hurts.”

“Just watch a little longer. I’m sure you’ll never forget it.”

There, the girl raised a cheer. The surrounding townsfolk all looked up at the formation of dragons flying through the sky. Cheers and whistles. And as if they couldn’t hear a lick of it, the two looked up at the sky.

“What was that!? What was that!”

“That was some high-level flying. There was a wind dragon at the lead, so I’m sure that person’s going to become an amazing knight of the dragoons someday. When they picked them up in less than a year, those movements were splendid.”

The dragons flying through the sky flew in a way they could show off their skill to the residents of the capital.

The delighted young girl waved her hand at the dragons in the sky. But the dragons had already gone.

“They’re gone.”

“It’s not done yet. The real show starts now.”

The father’s eyes sparkled, without blinking his eyes, he looked up at the sky. His expression was one that wouldn’t let the slightest movement go unnoticed, the face of a child.

There, a completely different unit of dragons from before showed movements as if they were dancing through the sky. On those movements on another level from before, the girl could only cry out, “Amazing, amazing!”

The father shouted, “No way, an aileron roll there!? Oy, oy, now that’s a combo!” he said in great excitement. The seasoned eyes of the capital’s residents had nothing but praise for the year’s flight formation...

“Father, that was amazing!”

“Yeah, but there weren’t many wild dragons this year. The captain has a gray dragon, so perhaps the dragoon’s quality is on a decline after all. Their movements were nice, but I wanted to see something more gallant. They used to swoop down so low you could almost touch them, but I guess they’re paying mind to safety...”

“Father?”

(Come to think of it, wasn’t the white knight supposed to come out this year? I believe... he had a gaia dragon, but I didn’t see it back there. They say he’s a future archduke, so maybe he’ll come out at the end.)

The man checked to see how the daughter on his shoulders was faring. The

girl who liked festivities ate her ice cream on her father's shoulders as she looked at the sky.

She looked at the sky enthralled, waiting to see if they would come again. Seeing his daughter like that, the man recalled his own past self.

He reminisced over how he had ridden the shoulders of his father, now a grandfather, looking up at the dragons like this. Back then, he had dropped his ice cream on his father's back. Recalling how angry he had gotten, he gave a bitter smile, only for his daughter to drop her ice cream.

"Hey, you have to keep a proper hold on it."

He didn't get as angry as his father before him. When dealing with his daughter, he couldn't help but soften his words. But his daughter stayed silently staring at the sky.

His surroundings grew silent as everyone stared. Feeling suspicious of his daughter and the surrounding residents who wouldn't say a word, he looked up at the sky as well.

"What's this..."

No one would answer the man's words. No, no one could answer.

Chapter 112: The Display and the King

The sky the capital's residents looked up to was one of cloudless blue sky.

But a shadow stretched out over the many onlookers. The light was interrupted by the flight of dragon upon dragon, enough to cover up the sky. At times, the sun would peek out from behind the dragons, but the residents were left unable to say a single word.

The heroic forms of the beautiful dragons were led to fly across the sky in file.

It wasn't a flight formation, it looked like a single large flow. The movements of the dragons went alongside the plaza, causing many to imagine the sight of a large flowing river.

They didn't do any aerial maneuvers. The dragons that flew in line showed a flight without a string's breadth of disorder. And flying at the center was a dragon especially large, even among its peers, a large brilliant dragon of white.

Red, blue, yellow, green... Its form as it flew protected by a conspicuously large dragon of each species made it look like a king of dragons. Eventually, the dragons passed above the townsfolk, gathering over the palace and rotating around it as if to draw a circle.

Right above the palace stationed in the center of the royal capital, a crest imitating the form of a dragon was put on show for all to see. That crest was formed of the lines of dragons, and from within it, a single dragon descended.

A single knight in white armor, a blue mantle on his back, boldly descended to the palace alongside that dragon.

"Demon lord..."

"Eh?"

On the mutters of a girl on her father's shoulders, the father stared blankly. Once the small girl's cry brought the silence to an end, the residents directed their eyes at her.

"I saw it in a picture book. The demon lord will come, leading his army. His

legions cover the sky as he attacks the palace.”

On that day...

In the country of Courtois, a young man called the demon lord was born.



The palace was dark, a large hoard of dragons interrupting the sky above them.

The place Rudel descended to was the same place that had been decided on beforehand. As promised, he hadn't carried out any aerial maneuvers, so under normal circumstance, there wouldn't be any complaints.

But...

“W-what is the meaning of this!?”

The first one to raise their voice was Aileen, protected by Fritz. The dragoons instantly took to the skies to protect the royal line and authorities. The difference in numbers was overwhelming, not a soul thought they would win.

Courtois had contracted with dragons from times of old, so long ago that many who feared the day the dragons would turn against them.

“We've invited in the rage of the dragons!”

“No way! They're not attacking.”

“Who was it. Who did this!?”

In the chaotic palace plaza, King Albach raised his voice.

“Do not falter! Carry on the ceremony. White knight, black knight, come forward.”

The unveiling was supposed to have the representatives come out before the king and kneel. There, the king called out to the knights. The whole goal was to show the residents of the capital the military might of Courtois. If the space devolved into chaos, then the country would grow chaotic as well.

“Let the orchestra play on. This is all per schedule.”

Albach took lead of that chaotic place, having Aleist and Rudel-who had dismounted Sakuya-come out before him. The authorities and knights who

could naught but look at the sky quieted their ruckus and faced the ceremony.

(... You've sure gone and done it.)

While he wanted to lodge a complaint or two, the king kept a tranquil expression as he called out to Rudel and Aleist.

"Splendid. I am pleased to be able to see the form of two such gallant knights this year."

"Sir! I take your words with the deepest gratitude."

"S-such words are wasted on..."

The two gave the responses decided on beforehand, but Aleist was confused. At times, he looked mindfully at the sky. He had taken off his helmet, holding it in his right hand, and it was his small fortune that had made him less conspicuous. If he wore it, then the twitching of his horns would alert the others of how mindful he was of the space above him.

(Even so, what terrible faces they've got. They're covered in wounds.)

As a result of their fights, there were marks remaining on their faces. While they had likely treated them, the treatment hadn't made it in time.

There were knights like this every year, but Albach never thought the two serving as representatives would be among them.

(Good grief, cleaning this up will be a headache.)

He was certain an urgent anti-Rudel countermeasures meeting would be called afterwards.



Once the ceremony ended, the knight brigades were supposed to disperse.

But after the wild dragons returned, Rudel was apprehended. Seeing Rudel taken off, Sakuya laid her rage bare.

The other dragons didn't try to stop Sakuya, so a situation where the knights fearfully surrounded her persisted.

When Sakuya roared, the knights in their best clothing uneasily took their stances. IT was a formal ceremony and they hadn't brought any decent

equipment with them.

“C-captain! It’s no good!”

“Don’t give up! We are before his majesty’s eyes!”

“No, but...”

When it took courage just to stand against a dragon, Sakuya boasted the biggest body of them all. There was no helping the knights fear her.

It was the fault of the royal guard for forcefully dragging Rudel off. Their treatment of him put Sakuya into a rage.

“What about the royal guard!?”

“What are the dragoons doing!?”

There were dragoons who would only watch from around, but that was because their own dragons couldn’t move. Oldart and Alejandro came up front to try to calm her down.

“Oy, oy, Sakuya-chan. Get too angry, and you’ll sprout wrinkles on that pretty mug of...”

“You’re definitely not trying, are you!”

Alejandro cautioned Oldart for his lack of motivation. Perhaps displeased at the wrinkle part, Sakuya roared out again.

Normally, these two would have accompanied Rudel, but the royal guard had driven them off. The royal guard asserted it was their jurisdiction, from Oldart’s eyes, it looked like they were desperate for achievements.

“No, even if you ask me to work for those bastards sake, you know...”

“Fool, this is a problem related to the honor of the dragoons.”

“Sure, sure.”

Oldart looked at Sakuya, he could see she really was angry. Their own dragons recognized Sakuya as boss, so he couldn’t carelessly get close. While the difference in power was clear, more than that, the finer laws of humanity held no meaning to dragons.

Her contractor was receiving unjust treatment.

If Sakuya thought so, that was the dragon truth. On top of that, still young, Sakuya had problems with regulating her emotions.

(No way I'm dealing with a child this big.)

As he was at his wit's end, there a single high knight appeared. The one who brought her was Aleist, who had removed his armor. Escorting her halfway, he dispatched that single female knight before Sakuya.

The female knight was Izumi.

As the high knight appeared, her ponytail swaying, the others wondered what was going on and made a path.

"Sorry, pardon me."

Still in her ceremonious knight garments, Izumi parted the crowd and came forward. While Oldart tried to have her step back from the danger, Sakuya's behavior blatantly changed.

"Oy, young lady, any closer is... oh."

Sakuya who-until just a moment before-had been spreading her wings and roaring time and again, suddenly groaned and folded up her wings. And Izumi looked at Sakuya.

While the roars had stopped, the surroundings maintained their tension. In contrast, Izumi approached without getting worked up.

"Rudel is alright. So it will be fine... right. Rudel's strong, isn't he?"

Seeing Izumi call out to Sakuya, the surroundings were surprised. While it looked like she was simply talking to herself, the dragoons knew that scene boasted a different meaning.

Alejandro made a face of surprise.

"Is she holding a conversation? A knight who isn't even a dragoon?"

"That's rare, but it's not unheard of. I'm just thankful our big girl's grown meek."

Oldart shrugged his shoulders sending orders around for everyone to stand down. Sakuya obeyed Izumi and sat on the spot.

The knights released from their tensions started looking at Izumi with eyes as if they were viewing their messiah. The new recruits who sat down had haggard looks on their faces.

That was just how mentally taxing it was to confront a dragon.

(Well, it really is harsh when you're not used to it.)

Oldart called his subordinates, giving orders for everyone who wasn't keeping watch over Sakuya to return. Sakuya was now lying down, and it seems Izumi was approaching her head to talk.

"... A hole? No, I really don't think you should do that here... no, I'm telling you it's a bad idea."

Sakuya was a gaia dragon with a liking for caves. She was bored waiting, so she was probably telling Izumi she wanted to dig a hole.

Hearing that, Oldart and Alejandro were flustered.

"Y-young lady! Stop her with all your might!"



The palace was in chaos from Rudel's actions.

The urgently-called meeting was held with everyone still in ceremonious clothing. At times, they would hear Sakuya's roars, the vibrations resounding, even through the distant meeting room.

The meeting pertained to how they would treat Rudel henceforth.

He had done no more than appear taking some dragons along, but the fact he led so many wild dragons was the problem. According to the man in question, it was a one-time thing.

But it was unclear whether or not that was true. If he was up to it, couldn't he bring ruin to Courtois? That was what they feared. But they couldn't treat him poorly. Rudel's own status was one thing, but now he was the white knight and famed through the land.

In the worst case, there was no guarantee killing Rudel wouldn't invite in the retribution of the dragons. No, from Sakuya's state, it was thought that the

possibility was high.

Once Rudel was shoved in a cell, the royal guard requested his transfer.

“Rudel-dono is dangerous. We cannot leave him in the charge of the dragoons. I beseech you to let the royal guard take charge of him.”

Without any conspicuous military gains and with Fritz as their captain, the seeds of panic had been born. They didn't think they would have the princess backing them forever.

Albach looked at the executive who spoke in Fritz' stead, sensing his impatience.

“On top of his numerous outbursts of problematic behavior since becoming a dragoon, I think you have come to understand through today's expo. Rudel-dono is not properly being handled.”

(So you'll handle him properly...? You'll pin down the white knight to obtain influence for yourselves? I think that's more trouble than it's worth.)

Seeing through the royal guard's impatience, Albach recalled Fina's warning to be wary of them. Even if you called him captain, Fritz held the authority of the head of a single brigade. If Rudel was placed under him, there would definitely be disputes.

They likely couldn't permit the fact the black knight was with the defenders. Even if he was on cleaning duty for now, it was certain he would work his way up.

Rudel was also a single knight, but at the same time, he was a future archduke. Staring ten, twenty years into the future, the royal guard were nothing but anxious. There was nothing to assure them Aileen would continue being their supporter in times to come.

Yet at the same time, they were rapidly holding power within the palace. They planned to make Rudel a part of that. To maintain that power, they needed a shrine greater than Fritz in value.

(This is getting troublesome. But...)

“I also endorse his transfer to the royal guard.”

One of the ministers signaled his approval, he said they should just entrust and quarantine him to the royal guard. While it was an indirect statement, it was a proposal to keep him as little more than a pet for life.

(These guys are even more trouble.)

Among his ministers, there would many who would stay Albach's hand. While they were preparing for the Gaia Empire, it was a situation where he would have to do something about them.

(But right now, Rudel takes precedence.)

He feared punishing him too harshly, inviting the rage of the dragons. Everyone felt the same. As there were many who signaled their approval, Albach looked at Fritz.

"And how thinks the captain of the royal guard?"

Fritz stood from his seat and gave a bold declaration. It felt almost as if he was just speaking lines written for him beforehand. When looking at him as a single knight, he was competent, and the king couldn't wait to see how he would grow.

But from his ideals and standing, he couldn't help but look unreliable. No, from Albach's point of view, Fritz was a hindrance.

"I will be able to contain Rudel. It is my belief it is much too dangerous to let him roam free forever. The problem lies in the individual's lack of self-awareness."

"Hmm. Then the royal guard can contain Rudel?"

"Precisely."

By Albach's personal opinion, if Fritz actually had that much power, then he would be fine with leaving the matter to him. But when compared to Oldart, he seemed to fall short, and on top of that, he knew that Fritz was doing nothing but drink tea with Aileen.

Even if he was entrusting work to his subordinates, there should be a limit to that. While it seemed the royal guard wanted to take Rudel in, he got the feeling opinions were clashing within.

(The defenders have the black knight. But the royal guard can't contain Rudel. In that case, it's best to keep the status quo, but...)

Albach looked at Fritz and the other royal guard executives.

"Then will you be able to cope if wild dragons come as they have today?"

"Yes."

Fritz answered full of confidence. But there, the roars they could hear from outside ceased. Albach sent a nearby knight outside to confirm the situation.

He considered that Rudel might have slipped out, but he got quite an interesting report instead.



"Special inspection officer?"

As Izumi accepted the papers from her superior, she felt the urge to tilt her head at the contents they detailed.

A few days had gone by since the ruckus at the expo, and when she dropped by her workplace, she was called out by her superior officer. Her superior who no longer had any hopes for the future... the captain of the high knight brigade smiled as she sipped tea.

"Yeah, your special talents have been recognized."

"Special? But I don't have any special talents..."

Izumi didn't think she had any talent distinguishing her from the others.

"You should be proud of the fact you were able to converse with a dragon you aren't contracted to and even sooth it at that. Even more so if the one you can converse with is that white one. I've heard you've held a friendship with her from your school days."

The papers listed Rudel as her target of inspection. Continuing on, she was to observe Sakuya as well.

"Well, your work will be taking you to the outer reaches of the kingdom, but your promotion has been decided."

A station on the outskirts was surely a strange promotion, but Izumi

confirmed the contents in surprise. She was being treated favorably. While being enlisted in the high knight brigade, she was granted a level of authority.

On top of that, she was even granted the right to choose her own subordinates.

Even if her duty was in the outer reaches, it wasn't as if she was being sent off to some desolate place.

"... But what exactly am I supposed to do? I don't understand the point of just watching him."

"That's more than enough. You've seen it at the expo, you just have to stop a knight and dragon before they run wild. This is a job only you can do. No, to think a connection from your school days would help out so, this is fate."

Some part of the captain who had been doing nothing but paperwork lately gave off a sense of resignation. Izumi had no right to refuse, so she took the papers and exited the captain's office.

As she walked down the corridor, she was surprised she had suddenly been granted the authority of a major.



In the dungeon, by the light of a lamp, Rudel was writing a letter.

"Who's it to? Izumi-san?"

In front of the grid bars, Aleist had been stationed to watch over the white knight. He also had his regular duties to attend to, so he was wearing an apron. It fit him much too well; Rudel didn't have anything particular to say in regards to his attire.

"To my disciple. I feel bad for Luecke, after all. I'm writing to tell her not to trouble him too much."

"... I can't think of those as the words of the culprit who caused today's ruckus. Should I put in something as well?"

Shoved in a cell, Rudel seriously thought over what he had done wrong. He had been banned from aerial maneuvers, so he had restrained the others from doing them. Was it bad to fly in formation over the palace? As he mulled over

that, he put the letter in an envelope and handed it to Aleist.

“I thought it was a success.”

“No matter how you look at it, that was no good. There are complaints coming in from the residents of the capital, or rather, it’s been considerably troubling with all the people coming in to confirm the truth of the matter. And right around now, his majesty included, the authorities and Fritz are holding a meeting.”

Rudel wondered if he’s caused them trouble again, but he found it strange the dragoons weren’t participating in that meeting.

“Why is Fritz participating when our captain cannot? Come to think of it, it’s strange for the royal guard to be there at all.”

“I guess that’s their authority in the palace? Princess Aileen is publically backing them, and a number of ministers are all for the royal guard, see. You’ve got to wonder what the world’s coming to when tea duty and cleaning duty are holding office.”

As Aleist derided himself, Rudel gave thanks about the matter with Izumi.

“You think? Well, whatever. More importantly, you were a big help back there. Thank you.”

“... Hahaha, Sakuya was glaring daggers at me, though.”

Aleist was giving a bitter smile, but when Rudel asked, he had instantly taken Izumi to Sakuya. It seems he had gone quite a bit past his station, and Rudel was thankful.

“I didn’t have the slightest intent to resist. And yet those guys from the royal guard...”

Rudel made a displeased face. He hadn’t the mind to resist. But the royal guard were much too eager as they pinned him down. From there, Sakuya flew into a rage, and he was in a state where he couldn’t even hold a proper conversation.

Right now, Izumi was at her side, and it seemed she’d calmed down.

“Was Flan von Brains no good after all?”

Perhaps Aleist recalled Sakuya's resentment before she lost her memories as he fell into a slump. From Rudel's point of view, he understood she didn't particularly hate him. But he knew Sakuya did think of him as a rival.

At the academy, the two of them would fight over any and everything. Perhaps this was the vestiges of it. Even when she had been reborn without memories, Rudel felt that Sakuya was still there.

"The way I see it, it's closer to rivals. I don't think she hates you."

"I really must decline a rival relationship with a dragon."

Aleist's face was stiff.



Fina was slumped over the desk of her room at the academy.

She had been normal up until she returned from the palace, but from the moment she got back, she had been in this state.

The reason lay in the documents on the desk. One was torn up, another crumpled. But for the last one alone, she was carefully writing a reply without damaging it.

"Goddammit... that black hair."

Her guard Sophina looked at her master, cheering her up with a smile. Inside, she was delighted to see her master grow depressed when her schemes went amiss.

"It cannot be helped, princess. This is also Rudel-dono's request."

The torn paper was one Aleist submitted. Hearing Luecke's tale, he had put in his opinion as Lieutenant.

"That ornament, thinking he can complain to me..."

She was irritated, so she devised a plan to shove some more female knight in his platoon next year. The crumpled document was a report detailing Izumi's action.

"Even so, appointing that black hair as a special inspections officer... my plans are..."

She didn't know what was on their minds, but they had officially recognized Izumi as an anti-Rudel trump card. Sophina felt relieved. And she was also relieved Izumi had been ascended to a status where it was hard for Fina to lay a hand on her.

The last one was a report from Rudel, but it was more accurate to call that one a letter. It was a warning that cautioned her on unreasonably securing funding.

"Uuuurgh, my fluff fluff land..."

"... That wasn't a joke?"

"No, once I got permission, I planned to actualize it. But if master's opposed..."

Pledging Rudel her heartfelt gratitude, Sophina took hold of Fina's response letter to Rudel. There, she informed Fina of the rumor she heard around the palace. For these sorts of things, Fina would listen to it as a single source of information.

"Come to think of it, have you heard the rumors surrounding Rudel-dono? It seems that ever since that display at the castle, he's being called demon lord more than white knight."

As Sophina gave a bitter smile, Fina expressionlessly cleaned up her desktop before getting back to work. She was listening, but she didn't stop her hands from moving.

Sophina swallowed down her true desires for her master to use her needlessly high processing power a bit more for the country's sake.

"Demon lord, eh."

"I was surprised at the display, and the palace is still busy with it. It seems they're going to leave him with the dragoon brigade as before, but the royal guard aren't staying silent about that."

"It would be crazier to leave him with a captain whose job it is to drink tea. Well, I'm sure my sister is making a ruckus, but... are there any movements?"

Sophina's eyes turned serious. She pushed up her glasses with the index

finger of her right hand, letting them catch the light.

“This isn’t confirmed, but it seems there’s a faction approaching Aileen-sama. The bats from around the border.”

“... Do you mean to say the traitors? Well, they’re in a painful position out there, after all. I don’t think it’s strange for them to want to have personal connections with the empire.”

“Aileen-sama’s zeal for the royal guard captain’s become a rumor around the palace as of late. Perhaps they think she’ll be easy to use.”

Sophina gathered information from her colleagues in the palace. The high knights were losing their power, but that wasn’t the full extent of Sophina’s connection. She also had her fellow marriage interview comrades.

While it didn’t make her happy at all, Sophina’s continued failures made everyone look at her with gentle eyes.

The faction she called bats were the nobles who held territory around the border. Neighboring an enemy country, the skirmishes were unbearable. But among them were some who would form personal connections with the empire to contain their casualties. To Sophina, they looked like traitors.

“There are sparks smoldering all over the place, and it won’t be strange if the whole thing is set alight at any second.”

“Should we move as well?”

“... No, let’s wait for now. When the time comes, I’ll put them to work whether they like it or not. Right, when the time comes.”

Sophina turned to her master cleaning up the paperwork and after giving a tidy bow, she left the room.

Chapter 113: Extra - Mystith is Working Hard

This is a tale of how the girl who once carried a great knight on her back, Mystith, ran about to prepare for an unveiling display.



The clock turns back to when Sakuya defeated the former boss of the dragon stables (Bram).

Having returned to her den, Mystith asked all the dragons of her lake about flight formations. But a dragon who had done flight formations didn't exist in Mystith's turf.

Before her promise to Rudel came into question, she wanted to do something for Sakuya's sake, she wanted to give her the best flight formation there could be.

'Even so, this is a bother. Even if you tell me flying in formation, just what am I supposed to do... they didn't use to have anything like that! But I'm sure Marty would be happy to see.'

She recalled the first human to ever make a contract with her, gallantly holding a spear in his hand. Even now, his form existed in her heart.

'And now that I've made a promise with that kid, I have to do something to make it a reality. If I can't find an answer in my turf, I just have to take the other turfs.'

Taking off from the lake she lived in, she looked at the mountain she could see in the distance. It was a volcano, still very much active, but there were dragons who lived there as well.

The ones who lived there were red dragons. Among the dragon species, they were the ones who boasted the fiercest temperaments.

'Alright! Let's start off with the easiest place.'

The small dragons of the lake saw Mystith off with a wave of their forelimbs.



The red dragons lived in a cave, scorching hot from the lava that flowed through it.

The fact the volcano didn't erupt was related to the fact the red dragons lived in it.

Appearing in such a place alone, Mystith called out to a young red dragon stationed on watch at the entrance.

'Oy, go get your boss.'

'Ah? What are you talking about, old haGGGYAAAAHHH!'

Punching down the youth with such a rude mouth, she walked right into the cave. She pressed on, blowing away the red dragons she occasionally encountered with her fists.

The boss' room was extremely vast. Lava welled up in the deepest chamber of the cave, and there lay a conspicuously large dragon who looked to be the boss. Around, the other dragons stood on their guard, presumably to protect him.

'Who dares come before me?'

Letting out a voice of dignity, the red dragon boss looked at Mystith. But Mystith informed him without faltering.

'Oy, who do you think you're taking that attitude in front of?'

'Ah, sorry, ma'am!'

The red dragon boss stood, quickly approaching Mystith. Curling his large body, he revised his attitude. The surrounding red dragons were shocked at their boss' sudden change.

'I told the young'un at the entrance to go get you, but you weren't coming so I came to see you myself.'

'My deepest apologies! I'll discipline him later.'

'No honestly, I couldn't care less. More importantly, from today onwards, I'm going to rule this place.'

'Eh? Eh! No, that would be quite troubling, or what's the word...'

Seeing the boss show weakness, a single young dragon stepped up front.

Irritated at the boss' timid form, he tried to show that he was the one worthy of being boss.

'hmm, I don't know who on earth you think you are, but I'm different from that cowardly mess. I'll make a bloodbath of you, and from today onwards, the boss will be fGYAAAAHH!'

Swinging her tail and sending that young dragon flying with a single attack, Mystith continued her conversation with the boss. Seeing a powerful dragon taken out in a single blow, the surrounding dragons fell silent.

'So? What's your response?'

'... I graciously accept your rule.'

'Thank you kindly, I knew you were the one to ask. I'll be off to the north for a bit, so follow my lead.'

'Yes ma'am!'



It was a place inhabited by hordes of wind dragons.

A place with nothing but rocky crags, and a place where the wind was strong. The wind dragons governed the wind, and by their influence, a strong wind would constantly blow through. Well, not that Mystith cared about that.

Alongside the red dragon, she had come to defeat the area's boss. If her memory served her right, this was supposed to be a vast territory.

'Come to think of it, I don't know the boss here.'

'Yeah, it's a young wind dragon. He's a bit impertinent, but before your charm, he'll be begging for mercy!'

While the red dragon was playing up to Mystith, he was once a boss with dignity. In the past, he had challenged Mystith to a match, and in the past, he had been beaten until his heart folded in. There was no way he could go against her.

According to him, the boss of this area was a young one who had risen to power in recent years.

‘... Hey, what makes him think he can become boss without paying me his respects?’

‘For real!? To think he never dropped by, he must be quite the trash-tier dragon!’

The two went out to face the wind dragon; fitting of his youth, their foe was brimming with ambition. From high up, he looked down over Mystith.

‘Oy, oy, what business do the elderly have with me?’

The dragon who called them elderly chuckled to himself.

‘Hey, is that guy the boss? He reeks of small fry.’

‘It’s that, you know. The last boss retired and all the influential ones went off to contract with humans, so he became boss by default.’

The two of them looked at the wind dragons, directing eyes of pity. He hadn’t the dignity of the boss, and those around him didn’t seem to respect him as one.

Mystith challenged that wind dragon to a fight.

‘You look real silly up there. Get down here and fight me. From today onwards, this territory will be under my command.’

‘Hmph! Putting on airs at your age... then try to keep up with me!’

The wind dragon leapt into the sky, parting from the two dragons at a rapid pace. Mystith looked on the scene with fed-up eyes.

‘Huh? I told him to come at me, didn’t I?’

‘He ran away.’

‘Then there’s no helping it. If he wants to play tag, then why don’t we keep him company.’

Mystith’s open mouth drew an arc as if she was smiling, her eyes sharpened. The red dragon was shaking, perhaps recalling the time his heart was crushed.

Mystith lifted herself into the air and chased right after the wind dragon. A few hour later, she returned, a wind dragon crying and apologizing under her arm.



‘Next is aunty’s place.’

‘Ah, the gaia aunty.’

As he consoled the wind dragon, the red dragon nodded at Mystith’s next objective. When it came to the remaining influential bosses, only a long lived gaia dragon female remained.

‘I’m no good with her. No, I don’t hate her, but...’

Even Mystith was weak to aunty. She had known her from a young age, and in her rebellious phase, Mystith had caused her quite a bit of trouble. She couldn’t look her in the eye.

‘More importantly, why are you suddenly expanding your territory? Up to now, you always said you weren’t interested, right?’

On the red dragon’s question, Mystith explained about Sakuya. About how she looked after her like a daughter, and about the flight formation she was misunderstanding.

‘Flying in formation, is it? I’ve never done it before. You?’

“Me neither... hic.”

‘I don’t have any kids who’ve contracted at my place. But I made a promise, so I’ve expanded my territory to find someone who knows about it.’

‘... For reals?’

‘Don’t expand your territory for something like that.’

As the two dragons made difficult expressions, Mystith headed off for the gaia dragon.

In a space with a number of caverns, the trees didn’t grow, but the grass and wildflowers decorated the landscape in shades of green. Where the gaia dragons lived, the large trees would all be mowed down. But as they were a race that governed the dirt, the soil was rich in nutrition. Approaching the largest cave, Mystith hit against the wall as if to knock.

There, a giant gaia dragon popped out her head. Her form as she slowly stuck

out just her head reminded them of a turtle sticking its head out its carapace.

‘Now here’s a rare visitor. I’m glad you look well, little lady.’

‘Hey! Quit it with the little lady stuff, aunty. Anyways, I came because I wanted your territory.’

While she took a clearly rude attitude, the gaia dragon didn’t seem to be particularly bothered. She even looked just a little happy.

‘You’re finally up to ruling? Then do what you will. More importantly, are you still stuck up over that human? I hear you haven’t laid an egg ever since back then. You’re already at a good age, so why don’t you find someone new?’

‘Aunty! You promised not to talk about that!’

On the negotiations between Mystith and the gaia dragon, the remaining two could only listen in, their mouths hung open in disbelief. There was someone even the savage Mystith couldn’t win against.

‘Well whatever. So with this, we have the main faces together. Now all that’s left is to get those folks with their own small territories to obey.’

‘We’re still doing this?’

‘Just how greedy are you?’

‘You’re going to rule over the other territories too?’

‘If we challenge them with these members, we’ll be fine. Let’s do our best for the sake of flight formations.’

And like that, Mystith came to rule the dragon dwellings as queen.



For the sake of flying in formation, the dragons began their training.

From the words of the dragons who had participated in it before, they reached the conclusion that, for now, they just had to put on a good show in the air.

So Mystith did precisely that.

‘Hey, you red dragons can exude fire from your bodies, right?’

‘Yes ma’am! We sure can.’

The red dragon who was once a boss showed her how he coated his body in fire. That form was practically that of a dragon made of flames, sinister, yet be that as it may, strong and beautiful.

But...

‘Lacking.’

‘Eh?’

Mystith didn’t feel it was enough.

‘Blaze up some more! That’ll just look shoddy if they’re looking from the ground! Okay, try again.’

‘... For real? This is quite tiring, you know?’

Next was the wind dragon.

Specializing in aerial movement from the start, they showed off a high-level flight formation in the air. But Mystith wasn’t satisfied.

‘It feels a bit lacking.’

‘We can’t go any faster than that, boss.’

To the wind dragon who had gone docile, Mystith pushed an unreasonable demand.

‘The red dragons will be making rings of fire in the air, so you guys will be passing through them.’

‘Eh!?’

‘Ah! And you guys could call down thunderstorms, right?’

‘No, that one is a real pain, and it’s not thunderstorms, we control the wind to gather clouds and...’

‘Do I look like I care? Just prepare some nice-looking clouds for the day in question.’

Faced with Mystith’s glare, the wind dragon averted his eyes and nodded.

‘I-I’ll do my best.’

Following on was the gaia dragon.

Gaia dragons were no good in the air. But if all they had to do was stand out, the kind aunty gathered up her brethren and had large rocks float in the air. Those rocks given lift through magic looked almost as if they were floating islands in the sky.

‘Aunty, that’s amazing!’

‘Well, this is about all I can do. If we practice a bit more, we should be able to send even larger rocks flying.’

‘And my folks will have water floating next to it, so do you think we’re getting a little closer to a flight formation?’

‘Who knows? We’re dim when it comes to humans. Even for the dragons that have contracted, it seems the knowledge they possess is much too old by human standards.’

A dragon and human’s perceptions of time were exceedingly divided. For one who lived in ten-year increments, a life form that lived hundreds, thousands of years held a completely different set of values.

‘For now, we still have some time, so we should be fine if we keep practicing.’

Mystith said that, looking satisfied at the practicing dragons, when the small dragon children started imitating what they saw. Making rings of water, they leapt into those rings and played by breaking the rings of others.

‘... There it is. That’s it! That’s what we were lacking!’

‘What’s up, boss?’

‘We just have to fly out of explosions!’

By Mystith’s plan, the red dragons would set off large explosions, and the wind dragons would swoop through them, avoiding at the nick of time.

They were all dragons. Something of that level should be fine. But while they could do it, it was quite a difficult thing indeed.

‘Give us a break already!’

In the dragon dwellings, the screams of a wind dragon rang out.



And the dragons prepared. Only a few days remained until the unveiling.

Mystith took along the representative dragons and headed off for Rudel.

“Mystith-sama! And three splendid dragons to boot... I’m moved to tears!”

Mystith wasn’t at all displeased with Rudel’s delight.

‘Hm, as promised, we’ve taken flight formation and made it our own. I’m sure the humans on the barren soil will shed their pluck and run for the hills.’

Before Mystith’s full confidence and the wild dragons of all varieties, a delighted Rudel relayed the message. It was a little difficult for him to say, but it was an important thing.

“I’m really sorry. I’ve been banned from aerial maneuvers during the flight formation. Sakuya can only fly out and descend into the palace plaza. If you’re flying with us, they probably won’t let you do aerial maneuvers.”

‘... Eh? Is that true? How unfortunate, we put quite a bit into it.’

Mystith was a bit disappointed. Similarly, the gaia dragon called aunty also muttered, ‘A shame’.

In that space, Rudel looked up at the gaia dragon in delight.

... But there were two who weren’t as satisfied.

‘When we worked so hard... goddammit.’

The red dragon rolled up into a ball and sulked. In contrast, the wind dragon...

‘Just where am I supposed to direct this anger of mine?’

He was seriously crying.



And just like that, unbeknownst to man, Mystith’s flight formation (pervert flight) was sealed.